

ASPECTS OF THE GROWTH AND PRACTICE OF THE ENGLISH

SHORT STORY

by

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Thesis presented for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

1958



### Acknowledgements

I should like to express my thanks to Professor W. L. Renwick, University of Edinburgh, for the advice he has given me during the preparation of this work; to Dr. Desmond Pacey, University of New Brunswick, who guided my early enthusiasm for the short story; and to the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire who facilitated this thesis financially.

No expression of gratitude can do justice to my thanks to my family and friends in Canada for their understanding and encouragement when it was needed most.

October, 1958.

D.G.S.



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## Preface

This thesis is based on the belief that the English short story deserves a more prominent position in the field of literary criticism, and on the aim to understand it as a distinct literary form. Though this study does not, in any way, pretend to fill that place, it is an attempt to understand the basic intentions of certain authors by an examination of the functions of the various elements which shape a short story. Such an end may best be achieved by the inductive method, by the use of concrete examples of writers whose work can be investigated, interpreted, and compared with others. The organization of this thesis is based on that principle.

The problems of the nature and structure of the short story are first approached through a discussion of the nature of the form. There are many ways of doing this, and here a factual approach is taken. This study perhaps may seem too obvious, but at times the obvious eliminates questions. In this section concerning the short story in general, a discussion of foreign trends and influences on the genre is made. It is not pretended that these points are completely exposed, but an awareness of their importance is an absolutely necessary

preliminary to the writers and to the aspects of technique and content which are to follow.

This general discussion is now reversed, and Chapters Two to Five are devoted to the presentation of the main qualities of six writers whose forte is the short story: one who reveals a strong interest in plot, one who deals with acute character analysis, two who use their stories to reveal abstract ideals, and two who write specifically about life around them. The purpose here is to illustrate, by an analysis and interpretation of various stories, the fact that the particular emphasis of the individual writer--on plot, on character, on theme--is inextricably involved with the other elements of a short story. These people are put into a chronological order--in so far as an order of this nature can be used here, for there is much overlapping in dates. Kipling wrote from 1890 to 1935, Mansfield from 1910 to 1923, Lawrence from 1910 to 1930, and Huxley started publishing in 1920. The order is based on the time when they started to write, and interest is focussed on the years in which all were writing. Coppard also started publishing in 1920, and his work is discussed with that of Cunninghame Graham who bridges the same time as Kipling.

The selection of authors has been undertaken with

the hope of providing as wide a range of examples of short story writers as could be reasonably expected in a thesis of this size. No attempt has been made at a great novelty in selection. For the most part, rather, the writers chosen are those who are popular and whose work is widely anthologized. Nor should it be taken that there is any intimation that the authors chosen are representative of short story writers or are the masters of the form. Obviously, many writers of great importance, and those who receive the highest admiration, are omitted. The authors presented are not the key writers of the short story. It would be impossible to do this for there are no key writers just as there are no key stories. Except in an extremely narrow technical sense, no short story writer can be adequately discussed in isolation from the history of fiction in general and the short story in particular. This thesis has been undertaken to investigate the technique of the short story as a literary form, and to examine the work of some of the best writers of the English short story. The selection of authors is small, but the number of writers who can be admitted to a thesis of this nature is necessarily limited. It will be observed, and by some objected to, that for the most part the interpretations of the author's work are descriptive and analytical rather than evaluative. The matter of the grading of short story writers, except for

very broad distinctions, is surely more a matter of personal taste. The interest here is to understand the nature of the short story structure, and to examine the work of a small number of writers. From this, it is hoped, a fuller acquaintance with the short story in terms of how it operates will be realized.

Chapters Six and Seven raise a number of special problems, and re-emphasize certain ones already mentioned. The aspects of technique and content discussed are not intended, and could not well be expected, to exhaust all the qualities which appear in a short story. An exhaustive treatment of these questions can never be expected. Nevertheless, the more important ones have been raised in concrete, and sometimes too obvious, terms in order to achieve an awareness of the intricate and subtle means by which authors of short stories practise their art. Until these chapters it will be observed that the discussions of the work of the six authors have not consistently touched on subjects which are called 'technical' in the strict sense: questions of focus, the shift from plot to character, means of character synthesis, narrators, and other techniques. It seemed fruitless to raise these completely technical questions until an interpretation of various authors was presented.

This thesis is a study of the English short story in a transitional phase. It was a time when it was unsure of its ground, and writers were practising new methods of technique. The 'plot story' was well established, and this was the time of the beginnings of the 'character story' and the 'mood story', an age when many writers were experimenting in a rapidly growing art. In covering such a wide field, one very clearly exposes breaks in one's reading, inadequacies in one's thinking, and deficiencies in one's sensibilities; and only various aspects of the growth and practice of the English short story have been attempted here.

Chapter One:    The Short Story  
Foreign Influences

## The Short Story

A story should be a story: a record of things happening, full of incident and accident, swift movement, unexpected development, leading through suspense to a climax and a satisfying denouement.

--Sir Hugh Walpole

The first necessity of the short story ...is its 'necessariness'. The story, that is to say, must spring from an impression or perception pressing enough, acute enough, to have made the writer write.

--Elizabeth Bowen

The first test of a short story, in any qualitative analysis, is the measure of how vitally compelling the writer makes his selected facts or incidents.

--E. J. O'Brien

The true short story is marked by seven characteristics: 1) a single predominating incident; 2) a single pre-eminent character; 3) imagination; 4) plot; 5) compression; 6) organization; and 7) unity of impression.

--J. Berg Esenwein

The short story can be anything the author decides it shall be...the short story, whether short or long, poetical or reported, plotted or sketched, has an insistent and eternal fluidity that slips through the hands.

--H. E. Bates

Many definitions of the short story have been, and



always are being, attempted. None of them, however, is satisfactory; they do not give an interpretation which can apply indisputably to all short stories. This is largely due to the very nature of the short story itself. It can be so many things; there is about it an infinite variableness which makes it impossible to be analytical in any discussion of the short story. When stories which differ so widely in plot and technique as those of Kipling and Katherine Mansfield, Chekhov and Hemmingway, are discussed, no epigrammatic description is applicable to all. Just as the short story is an intangible genre in literature, it is also a permanent thing. Perhaps it is the adjective 'short' which is the key to an examination of the short story. This word implies something which does not take much space on the printed page or require a great deal of time to read. The best criterion, then, is to compare the short story with another means of expression which is longer in space and time: the novel. Length can be accepted as the most apparent difference between the short story and the novel, but there are other distinctions between the two literary forms.

The short story and the novel each set different tasks and demand different talents. This is the obvious reason why there have been very few great short story writers who have been great novelists as well. The novel-

ist deals with a wider and more diffuse area of experience than does the short story writer; a short story entails compression and selection of facets of character, setting, and atmosphere. In fact, these parts are frequently woven together to such an extent that they cannot be distinguished as separate components of the story. The novelist exercises the art of accumulation and arrangement; the short story writer attempts to condense all parts into an integrated whole. Though entities of character-description, setting, and mood are separate, there should be a skilful flow of one element into another so that an active fluidity of parts can be achieved. There is integration, but it is gradual and not obvious. In order for a short story writer to be successful, he must have an intense and narrowed vision within which to create a memorable expression of his experience. This is true of any writer for whom the significance of things comes out as a story.<sup>1</sup> A writer who is personally introspective can create stories which are a reflection of his own concentrated thinking. He seems to be interested in the sharpened image, the moment, the condensed experience. A characteristic of the introspective writer is the tendency to see the world about him

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1. Some people may be as aware of things happening around them as is a writer, but it is an unanswerable question of human nature which makes some people write, and others not.

as if it were a sword cutting its way into his being and everything concerned with him. The interests of this kind of person are not broad enough to sustain the effort required in the creation of a compact novel, though diffuse ones have been attempted.<sup>1</sup>

One of the most prominent differences between a short story and a novel is that of character presentation. The short story writer need not create fully-rounded characters, while the novelist must do so. Usually only one or two sides of a personality are revealed in a short story since there is not sufficient time to show more than this, and frequently the focus is on one trait. The novelist, on the one hand, is primarily concerned with disclosing as many sides to his character as he can in order to portray development--the character would be static and considered poorly drawn if there were no change in personality from the beginning to the end of the novel; the short story writer, on the other hand, is chiefly concerned with a few characteristics of personality in so far as they carry out the story's principal theme. Closely connected with the problem of characterization is the one of the social background of the persons involved. A short story writer can omit social background using suggestion

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1. Joyce, Proust, and Dorothy Richardson, to name a few.

to give only the essential information needed for clarity. Most novels need a thorough description of the social background of their characters in order to prevent generalization by the reader concerning the problems with which he is dealing; what may happen in one society is not applicable in another, and this distinction must be drawn in a novel. Personalities and social background merely are suggested in a short story; they are as fully portrayed as possible in a complex novel.

Other main differences between a short story and a novel are obvious in that they are immediately linked to the problem of length. Just as the characters of a short story are not completely drawn, so is the setting only partially conveyed. It is closely associated with the atmosphere and mood of the story, and carefully woven into the story's fabric so that it is in the background. In addition, it is usually a shadowy part of the short story, elusive but always there by intimation. The plot, also, of a short story is slight--much slighter than that of the novel.<sup>1</sup> A short story may be an expression of a mere change in mood. A novel, however, is concerned with many moods and involves a thorough readjustment to these moods in the

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1. Some novels are complex studies of plot, although others may be character studies with very little interest in plot as such.

lives of its characters. Since a short story is usually one episode, it is limited in time. A novel is usually longer, though there have been successful novels which are concerned with one day in the lives of their characters.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, a novel is not one but a sequence of episodes which relate specifically--though sometimes irrationally--to a particular theme.

In the short story, manner and matter become an organic whole. The writer decides what his essential approach will be, what attitude he will assume, and what quality he will stress. This can vary from character to setting, but, whatever it is, it is carefully merged with the other parts of the story. The technique used--whether it be chatty, journalistic, or factual--is firmly associated with the theme and should suit the intended mood which the story is attempting to establish. By responsible attenuation, the story is reduced to its essential subject matter and is stripped of all superfluous embellishments. When this is done, the story is an integrated whole.

This end product is characterized by four main elements: character, setting, atmosphere or mood, and plot. Methods of exposition of character will be dis-

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1. Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway.

cussed in Chapter Six, and it will suffice here to say that only one or two aspects of a personality are displayed in a short story. Setting also is limited to the essentials, and only the parts are recorded which are actively a part of the story's central theme. Setting is rarely centralized in one paragraph of a short story, but it is made subtly present by association with other parts of the story. Atmosphere and mood are also integrated with the theme. A distinctive atmosphere in a short story is a difficult task for a writer, and is achieved only by rhythm, accumulation, and concreteness. Rhythm is an essential element of atmosphere and is created so that the flow of words and sentences suits the intended mood. By accumulation, details are filled in gradually, piece by piece and in a regular order; for emphasis apprehension may be sudden, but good, stable atmosphere is always progressive. Concreteness and exactness are especially needed here, for atmosphere is a subtle matter, but it is neither abstract nor vague; subtlety is the antithesis of vagueness, and atmosphere is sensed through specific, concrete, and exact details.

The plot is the skeletal framework upon which a story is built. No story can completely succeed without a plot, but a good plot is by no means a guarantee of

success. There are many stories, in fact, which have no real plot as such, but whose theme is put across by a strong character study, or a distinct atmosphere-evoking mood. A good plot must be definite; the writer must make a firm decision as to the story's exact scope, its issues, and its materials. A plot is better if it falls within the writer's own experience and knowledge, for a good plot reflects the interests, insights, and capacities of the writer. A plot needs a clear and definite structure; it goes to a certain point; it develops things that have been there for some time. A writer must classify the source and direction of the forces in his story, thus keeping himself from vagueness and vacillation. Finally, a plot must be worthy of its writing; not all areas of human experience are equally rewarding in any creative work. A plot needs many ingredients in order to be successful, but there are two parts which are very essential. It must have something secret in its make-up, for a story must hold the reader's interest, and part of that interest depends upon surprise. A second essential quality is that of universality, so that a story can have as great a meaning for one who lives in the British Isles as for the reader who resides in North America.

As equally important as these four elements are the basic principles of any form of expression. A short story



must observe the essential of unity. There should be a central focus of interest, and all components should point toward a unified impression. If this unity is absent, the story is confused and has too many unfulfilled aspects. It is much more advisable to have one theme clearly indicated and firmly drawn than to have many themes which are hazy and undeveloped. A short story writer should, above all, attempt to have an extremely clear picture of plot, character, and setting come through to his reader--for nothing disconcerts a reader more than to become confused in his reading. Often this confusion can be cleared up in the sequence of events in a novel, but the very length of a short story demands a clarity which can only be achieved by unity. This can be established by simplicity of effect, even in growth of tone and mood pointing to the impression which the writer wishes his reader to achieve. Economy is needed also; nothing should be repeated unnecessarily. Every episode should contribute to the final impression. Many short story writers make a practice of carefully rewriting their work to eliminate all which is unessential. This is an extremely good method, for it strengthens the story, making it concrete and compressed. The final essential needed is sincerity. Nothing detracts more from a story than does affectation or triteness on the part of the



part of the author. Conrad said that "a story should be a fragment of experience held up in the light of a sincere mood".<sup>1</sup> The reader deserves to feel that he is saying something worthwhile. Integrity is the writer's password to an appreciation by his reader.

There are many types of short stories, and a few of the predominant ones will be mentioned here.<sup>2</sup> One of the most prevalent forms is the anecdote, a narrative of some detached incident--a technique used frequently by Conrad and Kipling. Usually it is introduced by a speaker and is set in a framework of conversation. For the most part, it is a factual story relying on its realism for its appeal. Many times it deals with an incident which is highly improbable, but which actually happened. The fact that it did occur makes it appeal to the reader, who is invariably interested in 'truths which are stranger than fiction'. Closely aligned with this form is the short story of 'descriptive journalism', practised by Kipling, Coppard, and Cunninghame Graham. This is actual

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1. Joseph Conrad, in his Foreword to Edward Garnett's Turgenev, a Study, with a Foreword by Joseph Conrad, Collins, London, 1917.
  2. Types of stories which are clearly defined and well recognized--"sport" stories, "young love" stories, "moral" stories, "child" stories, "sea" stories, "business" stories, "crime" stories, and the like--are not discussed in this thesis, because of their obvious categorical aspects.

fact and only becomes a short story as distinct from pure journalism because it has more description than the latter, and also has a moment of climax either in plot or in character change. This form is not in a framework as is the anecdote, but it is factual and clear-cut, coming close to journalism because of the crispness in its approach. Compactness in expression is a dominant part of both these forms of short stories.

Another kind of story is one which is purely lyrical and is therefore very close to poetry. Here the emphasis is on setting and mood. Atmosphere is created by words which are poetic, and the story is full of descriptions of places and things. Character emerges by the application of distinctly poetic descriptions of actions and gestures rather than by a presentation of the dialogue of the character concerned. This type of story can become so completely poetic that a free-verse poem can easily be constructed from the lines of prose.<sup>1</sup> In this type of story the writer uses rhythm consciously to put across the atmosphere and tone. Mood is the chief interest of the writer when he creates a lyrical short story, and this is made manifest by the flow of the sentences to sustain a rhythm closely associated with the intended mood.

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1. This has actually been done in the case of the work of the American writer, Thomas Wolfe.

Whereas the lyrical short story is primarily concerned with atmosphere and mood, personality is revealed in the 'character study' type of short story. In this form, the writer is not concerned chiefly with plot, but rather with how the characters develop through certain situations in their lives. Though only one or two facets of personality are displayed, they are complete and are the main emphasis of the story. Plot, setting, and atmosphere are incidental and only lightly suggested when there is a direct relationship to the character being revealed. This type of story is only less complicated than that which is a 'psychological-study'. In this form the character's thought processes are revealed. Again it is only one or two aspects of personality which are displayed, but they are the core of the story. As many parts of the specific aspect of personality as can be revealed by intense psychological interpretation is exhibited for the reader's perusal. It is as though one were listening to the conversation of a patient on the psychiatrist's couch.

This form is known as the 'slice-of-life' short story. When the episode is revealed, it is as though the reader had come around the corner and found the action in progress. In this type of story there is no introduction

or description of setting to initiate the reader. What setting is needed is unconsciously revealed by the characters themselves or in the description of the action. The story is ended the same way; often there is a surprise ending, or one about which the reader has to make his own decision regarding the outcome. For a while, the reader has glimpsed another part of life, and he leaves it as quickly as he found it. These stories are usually concerned with everyday situations, and appeal to any reader because they could happen anywhere and to anyone. A 'slice-of-life' short story can go in two directions. It can descend to the level of story often found in Woman or The Ladies Home Journal--stories which are written for their selling value for those particular types of magazine, and for the mass appeal which they enjoy. The other direction is toward the form of story now called 'the New Yorker story', which is an intense 'slice-of-life' story often found in the American magazine of the same name. It is a well written story, full of bright comments and credible situations, though frequently diffuse by active over-cleverness. The author of this type of story seems bent upon effacing himself and confronting the reader with the direct mental experience of the characters. This removal of the author from the scene of the story--he remains often as an intruder,

but is no longer omnipresent--places the reader in a strong intimate relationship with the characters. This type of story seems to turn the reader into an author; it is he who puts the story together, and he who sorts out the accumulated effects of setting, atmosphere, and character. The methods used in this kind of story will be discussed in the chapter dealing with the shift of short story interest from plot to character.

Readers want many things in a short story--interesting people with whom they can identify themselves through mutual emotions and problems, humour, action, colour, suspense, surprise, a touch of sentimentalism, a touch of regret, laughter and tears. If this, or part of this, is all it contains, then a story will be a second-rate one. A first-rate story, however, can have all these things, and needs either all or one of: social comment, man's struggle with himself and others, a sign of the author being moved to tell his story, universality, and a capacity to bring pleasure to the reader. The 'modern short story' is not one told by a carefully designed plot but by implication of certain isolated incidents. The arrangement is important for it gives significance to otherwise casual moments. On the surface this 'story' or 'plot' may seem trivial or unimportant,

but under analysis it interprets individual emotional life. The artificial life of an obviously carefully wrought plot is replaced with a record of life seen at first hand, expressed by one of the many different types of short stories. Each of these types of short stories possesses characteristics peculiar to itself, demands different talents, and gives the reader different satisfactions. When these types are at their best, there is no better means of expression.

### Foreign Influences

The two foremost critics of the short story, Elizabeth Bowen,<sup>1</sup> and H. E. Bates,<sup>2</sup> feel that the history of the short story can be naturally confined to the twentieth century. This reasoning, I feel, is faulty, for the logical history of the short story can be traced back to the early myths, and what better example of a story can be found than in the legends and fables of early times? The Biblical parable and the anecdote are again other examples of carefully wrought stories.<sup>3</sup> The culmination of the short story--or the period when it most flourished--obviously belongs, however, to the contemporary period, an age whose limits might be roughly marked out as from 1875 to our day. Though this thesis deals with aspects of the short story in the twentieth century, it does not mean to say with Bates that "the history of the English short story is very brief, for the simple reason that before the end of

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1. Elizabeth Bowen, Introduction to the The Faber Book of Modern Stories, Faber, London, 1937.
  2. H. E. Bates, The Modern Short Story, Nelson, London, 1941.
  3. A. J. J. Ratcliff, in his Introduction to the Short Stories of H. G. Wells (Nelson, London, 1933) feels that these are not stories but 'just a straight forward tale of one or more events'. The distinction appears to be too fine.



the nineteenth century it had no history".<sup>1</sup> Even if myth, fable, legend and parable were excluded, it would be impossible to dismiss the short stories of prominent writers<sup>2</sup> of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, particularly those stories which Dickens contributed to Household Words and which reveal a deep awareness of the essential qualities of a short story.<sup>3</sup> The growth of the English short story, though more refined in the last fifty years, has been rich and varied.

The English short story, however, did not develop on its own, but owes a great debt to French and Russian literature. Throughout the nineteenth century, the literary conditions of France and England had been growing more substantially similar. The symmetry between the two literatures was emphasized; the traditional oppositions were still felt, but they were no longer paramount. The two countries had always played predominant parts in each other's literary history.<sup>4</sup> In the sphere of the short story, it is the French who influenced the English. This is also true of the Russian influence.

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1. H. E. Bates, The Modern Short Story, Nelson, London, 1941, p. 14.
  2. Meredith, Defoe, Thackeray, and others.
  3. An obvious example: "Cricket on the Hearth".
  4. Louis Cazamian, Criticism in the Making, Macmillan, New York, 1929, p. 143.



Though English writers had always been conscious of the literary trends in France, they were not as cognizant of Russian literature until, as Phelps says, "during the 1880s and 1890s Russian literature firmly established itself".<sup>1</sup> The literary world was getting smaller, and Russian translations became fashionable in the early twentieth century. Things Russian were common to the 'intelligentsia' in the second decade of the century, when Constant Garnett was first publishing her translations. This interest in Russian literature is now past, but its influence is still with us.<sup>2</sup>

All writers are consciously or unconsciously influenced by earlier writers. An author in the act of creation may consciously imitate the work of another writer, or his story may be unconsciously shaped by his previous reading. When a story is finished, the most obvious borrowings and surface similarities may be noted. The conscious influences--the plot of a story, the methods of character synthesis, the presence of the author--are easily discovered. These may be borrowed and then absorbed into what is generally a quite different aesthetic.

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1. Gilbert Phelps, The Russian Novel in English Fiction, Hutchinsons, London, 1956, p. 39.
  2. 'The most elementary remarks upon modern English fiction can hardly avoid some mention of the Russian influence': Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction", The Common Reader, Hogarth, London, 1925, p. 77.

The profound influence which one can hardly note, however, may work indirectly, and possibly in ways the borrowing writer does not fully understand or even acknowledge to himself. A particular ascendancy is difficult to assess because it is all but impossible to follow it through the unique and subtle transformations it undergoes in a writer's mind. An influence may go through many phases and may be shelved in the writer's subconscious only to reappear in a different context from the original. It may fuse with another influence, and this in turn may be modified by other influences to manifest itself in a new form. With the creation of a new work, the obvious influences are lost, and it is especially difficult to trace a new form back to its original impetus. A writer may remember for a while an idea of another author and then forget it. Ultimately the idea becomes a part of the writer's thought, but its exact source is forgotten. The idea itself may be fashioned into a different thought so that the similarity is present only in overtones, and the influence becomes so subtle as to be almost intangible. The prevalence of certain moods and particular subject matter may provide an obviously recognizable influence, but in the shadows of the work there are reminiscences of other writers that seem equally present but less easy to trace to any definite source. At first these overtones

seem to be naturally evident, but when one attempts to find their roots they become more obscure and the general problem of influences becomes more difficult; and sometimes it is not an influence but rather the discerning evidence of an 'affinity'.

The specific problem of influences related to the English short story is especially difficult. The English short story is so highly derivative that it is sometimes impossible to assess any particular influence. When reading a collected volume of many English short story writers, one becomes aware of many echoes of French, Russian and American writers. After reading a few representative English short stories, a reader is reminded of a style, a mood, or a theme which can be found in many stories of a major European writer who wrote many years before the English writers. Because there are so many overtones that bring other writers to the reader's mind, the direct influence is frequently lost. We may think of a certain writer when reading a contemporary story, but in trying to trace our thought to a direct source confusion generally results. These 'shades' or 'echoes' of other writers in short stories are often obvious because the authors created their work with a definite atmosphere in mind. Whether consciously or unconsciously created, the mood

of an English short story is often much the same as that invented by writers in other languages. This is not difficult to explain. Because a writer in 1915 explicates a mood similar to one in a story published in 1885, it does not mean that a direct influence can be identified. It is quite common for men in different ages with no awareness of each other to have similar ideas. Nonetheless, it is true that the trend of short stories written in France and Russia in the last half of the nineteenth century had a strong influence upon the stories written in England in the early twentieth century.

The predominant French influence on the English short story is that of Guy de Maupassant who was the chief explicator of the genre in France in the 'eighties and 'nineties of the last century, though he was by no means the first writer to use the form.<sup>1</sup> The 'conte', or short story, has been a more popular form of expression with French writers than English ones since the Middle Ages. In medieval France, the stories, usually written in verse, were written in a spirit of satirical realism portraying

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1. There are other French writers--Anatole France and Zola, for instance--who influenced the English short story. Because of the nature of this thesis, it was felt that only one writer from France and Russia would be discussed in this section. Because his influence is the predominant one, Maupassant is used here.

comic adventures common to every type of man and woman. In the eighteenth century the 'conte' rapidly became a vehicle of social and political propaganda; it degenerated into a kind of pamphlet to attack the attitudes of the times. It was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that the French short story began to deal again with the actual world of man. Once more the 'conte' began to relate interesting events arising from the behaviour of real people and affecting their immediate fates. Actions and thoughts of the characters were completely natural and not marked with reflections on moral or social questions. With the emergence of the Realists, the short story came into its own, and Maupassant cannot be denied the position of the greatest French short story writer.

Maupassant's most outstanding quality is that his stories are always artistic wholes. Many writers attempt to capture a mood or fix attention upon one character, but their stories have no recognizable beginning, middle, or end. Almost without exception, a Maupassant story does have these definite parts. He always tells a story, and it can be broken into these three distinct sections. There is an introduction to the main theme, usually a description of a place or person, and

occasionally the implication of a mood. This is followed by the story proper where the focus of attention is upon an episode and the reaction of the characters to that given situation. Maupassant ends his stories by tying together the various threads of the plot, indicating the final outcome, and that life for his characters will continue similarly. In many short stories the chief interest depends upon the unravelling of the plot. Maupassant does this, but in his conclusions identifies his story's universality. His endings not only illuminate the action preceding them, but also indicate the basic problems of the characters and bring to the reader a curiosity about the important things in human relationships. He does not moralize or decide a social question, but rather gives a universal theme to an ordinary situation. There is about a Maupassant story a quality which makes the reader meditate on suggestions which outrange the immediate theme of the story.

Examples of this can be seen in two of Maupassant's most unforgettable stories: "Boule de Suif" and "La Maison Tellier". In the former, the last impression is that of the prostitute crying in the corner of the coach while her companions, for whom she has recently sacrificed herself so that all of them may continue their journey,

shun her. It is remembered that in the beginning of the story she shared her food with them, but now they eat their food and disregard her. They may forget the situation, as may the prostitute; Maupassant, however, makes it impossible for the reader to do so. One of the characters, Cornudet, has been whistling the "Marseillaise", but there is little in the coach of the high ideals of 'Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity'. The other passengers in the coach are ordinary people drawn from average walks in life. Does human nature then, always react to uncomfortable situations (as the sacrifice of the prostitute must have been uncomfortable for the others) in a cruel and selfish example of ingratitude? Maupassant does not say anything, but the questions arise. The only obvious item one can find which provokes this question is the whistling of the French national anthem; the rest is inferred.

In "La Maison Tellier" Maupassant does not moralize, but stays within the confines of the role of a storyteller. The celebration of the communion is over and the prostitutes are back at work. Their day has been varied, and they have moved from the bawdy atmosphere of a brothel to the brief hours in the country and back again. Madame is kind and thoughtful, yet the reader wonders why the



girls are part of this semi-slavery and why they are content to be there. It is perhaps inevitable that establishments such as this should continue to flourish, but why is it so? These views are inspired in the reader yet nowhere does Maupassant comment on them. By his choice of subject and an unconscious investment of suggestion, Maupassant produces these ideas with great impact on the sensibilities of his reader.

Though his characters pose universal questions, seldom do they attain great stature. He does not create a Hamlet or an Emma Bovary. His characters are, as a rule, very ordinary people involved in a critical situation--critical, at least to them. His men and women are not projected against the complete background of society, nor are their emotions analysed until they become great passions. Rather, they are merely--and deliberately--presented in relation to a particular situation, and their individuality is overshadowed by the idea they typify: the vanity of a woman wanting real jewels for a ball, the repressed ideals of people found anywhere, the unhappiness of a married man. The society he writes about is composed of people preoccupied with the matter-of-fact business of everyday realities. Their desires and tragedies are usually confined to domestic



situations; and it is the situation which mainly concerns him. His are stories whose chief interest is in plot, in the telling of a story. That is perhaps why his characters are not memorable, and his stories remembered by the episode they reveal.

When a writer is as popular in his own country as Maupassant was in his, it is very soon that his works appear in translation for a foreign market. English translations appeared quickly, and it was not long before his influence was seen in the works of English short story writers. Maupassant's influence came at a ripe moment, for English literature in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was in need of change. Too long it had been under the yoke of Victorianism. Maupassant gave to English writers an impetus to change from the wordiness and active moral teaching of the Victorian 'sketch' to the more concrete expression of a modern short story. His were the stories which were used as models to create a new literary genre.<sup>1</sup>

The quality the writers first grasped from Maupassant was that of concreteness. No longer were there

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1. 'Maupassant was an impeccable artist, but I think the secret of the hold he had on the young men of my day was not so much that we discerned his cunning as that we delighted in the simplicity which his cunning achieved': Max Beerbolm, "A Relic", And Even Now, London, 1922, p. 7.

long expositions of place and character description, but rather the story was made more succinct. One cannot trace this change directly to Maupassant, for it would be impossible to find the exact reason out of so many: revolt against Victorian writing traditions, a need for innovation, among others. It is, however, logical to assume that there was an attraction in the Maupassant story, and this simplicity in exposition is one of his greatest attributes. Never is there over-explanation in a Maupassant story; they rather distil the essence of a scene, adding nothing which does not bear upon the story. Every word in a Maupassant tale is selected to add to the overall impression. To make everything clear, all superfluous descriptions are removed and basic words are used. He does not rhapsodize for paragraphs over a sunset or a field of grain as do the Victorians, but describes his scene with simple phrases and then continues with his story. He did not elaborate action and scene with heavy descriptions, because he was writing, almost without exception, from interpretations received from his own personal knowledge of life. Fortunately that was varied and extensive, and he never went outside this realm of his experience. The Victorians had to use diffuse descriptions to give impressions of people, events or places they had never seen. From Maupassant

it was learned that a successful story could be given from events around the writer, that it was unnecessary to tax the imagination about things not seen in reality. Naturalism was coming into the English short story as it had been in the Victorian novel. Writers of sketches in the nineteenth century seemed to think that they were only successful if they wrote of far away places. Maupassant's stories of immediate surroundings brought them up short. They could now compete with the novel for a purely English background, and draw a picture of the life around them. It had to be short, to the point, and complete, but it could be local. It was the beginnings of the 'slice-of-life' short story brought out by the senses of a French writer who wrote stories of the life around him.

Soon English magazines were reflecting the stories of Maupassant. His most obvious influence was the story with the trick ending, though in reality only a fifth of his published stories end this way. This trick ending, particularly noted in "The Necklace", was something which appealed to writer and reader alike. The element of surprise is always attractive, and the ironical twist of chance of Maupassant's stories had wide repercussions. The story with a trick ending will always be a popular

one, and it can be traced quite firmly to an influence of Maupassant.

The first most prominent influence on the English short story can be traced to that of Maupassant. He created the taste for the short story of plot--a story whose essence is in its situation and not in its characters or its atmosphere. Until the late nineteenth century, the short story in English was no more than a 'sketch', an episode which was really no more than an isolated fragment of an unborn novel. Maupassant's influence gave the story a beginning, middle, and end. Because he was so conscious of his applied formula, it was difficult for him to achieve a profound and detailed analysis of character; therefore, as has been stated, his characters do not stand out in the reader's memory as clear cut and forceful individuals. He strengthened the story into an integrated whole, and because his characters do not live and his plots do stay in the reader's mind, it is always obvious that a Maupassant story is, after all, only fiction.

It was Chekhov<sup>1</sup> who gave to literature the other kind of short story, that of character study. Without the allurements of suspense or climax, his stories make

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1. Though Chekhov's is the predominant one, the influence of Turgenev, Gorky, and others, is strong.

the reader feel that he is with the rest of life. They do not depend for effect on a series of happenings, a use of suspense or verbal wit. Rather, they extract the greatest possible interest from one or two situations and in those ultimate moments the past is revealed and the future is suggested.

With this interest in plot, two main attitudes predominate. The first one is psychological, where a single character is examined from within or without. This can be done in various ways, by acute observation and implying personality from outside action, or by revealing the character by his thoughts as in 'stream-of-consciousness' or 'internal synthesis'. The second attitude is sociological where a group of people is revealed. Chekhov does this in his stories of the people of the Russian steppe or in a typical Russian village. The most obvious sociological stories in English are those of Katherine Mansfield<sup>1</sup> where she examines the New Zealand family or the dream worlds of the middle classes.

It is interesting to note that Chekhov's most predominant influence in the short story are things for

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1. The similarities between Mansfield and Chekhov have been examined by Elizabeth Sneider in "Katherine Mansfield and Chekhov", Modern Language Notes, New York, June, 1935., and by other critics (Berkman and Alpers).

which literary critics most reproach him.<sup>1</sup> He has been accused of painting trifles, mere episodes which have little plot interest. They are unique character studies and the reader is immediately struck by the extraordinary range of his subjects, though they are taken from Chekhov's contemporary Russia. He shows the mind of a lay-brother grieving the death of a monk who had written inimitable hymns ("Easter Eve"), the home where the husband steals his wife's jewelry and who says nothing while the governess's room is searched ("An Upheaval"), and the artist who talks too much and works too little ("Talent"). He was concerned with the character's reaction to a situation though the latter may appear to be an insignificant one. What was important to Chekhov was the feelings of the character. He answers the question as to why and how a person reacts to a specific moment, and extracts everything he can from this in order to complete a striking picture of the person involved. He was primarily an observer and he saw his real-life subjects with the eye of a student of personality. He remained outside his characters and in this proper perspective he could create live people in their relation-

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1. William Gerhardt, Anton Chekhov, A Critical Study, Duckworth, London, 1928, and Ronald Hingley, Chekhov: A Biographical and Critical Study, Allen and Unwin, New York, 1950.

ship to society, and not dwell on the neatly contrived situation. In "The Darling", one of his best stories, he paints a happy woman who is devoted to each of her husbands in turn and who adopts successively the interests of each. She is remembered as such; yet the theme of the story lies in the multiplicity of her attachments, and brings her action to a wider social scale. She is interesting not only for herself, but because she reflects a large segment of humanity--the chameleons of society. This is linked to the criticism that Chekhov has no heroes.<sup>1</sup> This is quite true, for his characters are not interesting only for themselves, but because of the part they play in the larger scheme of society of which they are only the smallest part. He is condemned because he offers no social solution. It is left to the reader to draw critical references from a Chekhov story. He only presented the character and situation as he saw it, giving as much as he could see, and it was up to the reader to point the social question.

Since he extracted all he could from a given episode, it is easy to see that Chekhov is a master of mood. He conveys to his reader the direct emotion of his subjects,

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1. David Magarshack, Chekhov: a Life, Faber, London, 1952.



their sufferings and elusive reactions not only to one or two direct things in their immediate world but to their past and future. We feel the exact climate of the characters at a particular moment in their lives. They seem to reveal themselves unconsciously, not only by a deliberate entering into their minds, but by what they do or say. This excellence of mood is strengthened by brief descriptions of nature which are always subordinated to the general theme of the story. His descriptions are never involved nor do they hold up the action. That every detail mentioned should have an active function in the story as a whole was Chekhov's aim. His nature descriptions either reflect the story's mood directly, or are contrasted to make the initial mood more compelling.

A story in the typical Chekhovian manner is one chiefly concerned with character and mood developing from a small episode in everyday life, but primarily due to a psychological cause which has been with the character for some time which may change due to the situation or remain the same. In a convincing picture of an episode in a character's life, the reader gets to know and to understand the subject as completely as possible. This understanding is not conveyed to us by description and character analysis, but by the presentation of a small

sample of the character's life in which memories of the past and hopes of the future are as important as the thoughts and actions of the present. Chekhov's aim is not the coldly indifferent analysis of a specimen in a glass case which recent authors have practised. He limits what is revealed in that we are not shown uncomfortable things, things which we would not want people to know about ourselves.

Chekhov's influence on the short story is probably the most lasting one. Short stories in the second and third decades of this century reflect his type of story--one where the interest is in character, not in plot. The modern short story is either a careful study of plot with an element of surprise or suspense, or is a study of a character's reaction to something specific. It is the character which is the focus of a Chekhov story. His influence has been wide-spread, for the innovators of the short story in English, once they had tired of the logical Maupassant story with a beginning, middle and end, attempted to write about people in everyday situations, and tried to capture the mood or state of a personality. Examples of this 'slice-of-life' interest can be seen in all the prominent writers of the short story in the twentieth century--Mansfield, Lawrence,

Coppard and others. These popular writers in turn influenced the second-rate writers of stories, and today one cannot find a magazine which has short stories that do not reflect his influence indirectly. The twentieth century is interested in people. Freud brought this to a climax with his work, and his influence is felt everywhere; a study of the psychological is an important facet of today's literature. Chekhov, and his interest in character, appeared on the literary scene when time was ripe. His influence on the modern short story (the 'slice-of-life', the New Yorker story) is the most lasting one so far. Cleverness of plot from Maupassant dictated a change from the Victorian sketch. This change put the short story on its own and gave to it a strength. The psychological studies of Chekhov went farther, and made the short story what it is today.

Both Chekhov and Maupassant, representative of their country's literature, greatly influenced the growth of the English short story. Until the late nineteenth century, the short story in England was more of a sketch, written in a wordy manner reflecting the moral tones of the Victorians. The main Russian and French influence is the same. English writers had to learn to be brief, and of this brevity to make a virtue. Economy of means is an

outstanding characteristic of a short story. Though first attempts in the 'nineties were discursive, English writers quickly acquired a remarkable feeling for scale in the really short story. They focussed their attention firstly on the story of plot, then innovated with the story of character, but always were conscious of the aim to be concise. This quality of conciseness soon led to simplicity. Maupassant always explained his stories, but the aim for brevity often made Chekhov leave the reader in mid-air so that the final interpretation was his. They wrote what they saw, and never over-explained. The short story became a masterpiece of construction, economy, and characterization.

Chapter Two: Rudyard Kipling

Rudyard Kipling

No history of the English short story can ignore the contribution of Rudyard Kipling. His first work was published in 1888, the year of D. H. Lawrence's birth, yet he lived six years after Lawrence's death. He did not write the type of traditional short sketch or episode which was typical of writers in the late nineteenth century, nor did he focus his attention upon the stream-of-consciousness writing which became a prominent feature of creative literature in the second and third decades of the twentieth century. Nor is he a 'transitional' writer, using with discretion various techniques of either period. His work covers a large stretch in time; he belongs to no school nor tradition, to no age nor period. It is this paradox which makes it difficult to classify Kipling. He indeed 'created the taste by which he is to be enjoyed', and his art of telling a story was new at the time of its making. It is still new today, though more familiar to us. His followers, or rather his imitators, have never really grasped his essential qualities: the clear biting attack, the perfection of balance in technique, and the economy of detail.

These qualities are seen in his first book, Plain

Tales From The Hills, published in India in 1888. Provoking and brilliant, sometimes scandalous, these stories startled the Victorian age, which is a merit in itself. The majority of them were originally written for the Civil and Military Gazette,<sup>1</sup> an Indian newspaper for which Kipling was a reporter; the stories had to be limited to the space of a column and a half. This limitation forced Kipling to cut out many words, to compress the action and plot, and to make stories from small incidents. They are written by a journalist, and often descend to the level of a gossip-column based on information gathered in unexpected places. The style reminds one of club-conversation, or something overheard in a coffee lounge or a cocktail bar.. Beginning abruptly, the stories are complete with the asides and comments of conversation, and end with the phrase, 'But that is another story' which, like many other Kipling assertions, became the 'fad' in contemporary speech.

This volume of short stories, Plain Tales From The Hills, foreshadowed the type of work which Kipling pursued throughout his career. There are five farcical stories which show his rather crude taste for coarse,

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1. Twenty-eight appeared originally in this magazine; the remaining twelve were written especially for this volume.



practical jokes; two which deal with children, revealing Kipling's understanding sympathy in them and their tastes, a dominant part of his later stories; the rest deal with the life of the Indian, the Anglo-Indian society, and the army. His theories about India are present here in miniature. Mrs. Hauksbee<sup>1</sup> is able to change affairs of state by subtle social pressures, and Kipling was later to say that social life affected the politics of a country far too much. He respects the place of the native in India, and feels that sympathy, rather than advice, should be given to their caste-rules. Strickland, the police-officer, is perhaps Kipling's final comment on life in India:

He held the extraordinary theory that a policeman in India should try to know as much about the native as the natives themselves. But this has done him no good in the eyes of the Indian Government.

The soldiers--Mulvaney, Learoyd, and Ortheris--were to appear better drawn in subsequent stories.<sup>2</sup>

It was not only the subject matter which distinguished Kipling from his contemporaries. The economy of words which his journalistic career had taught him gave to

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1. Mrs. Hauksbee first appears in "Three and--an Extra" from this volume. She also appears in "The Rescue of Pluffles", "Consequences", and "Kidnapped".
  2. The volume Soldiers Three, published in 1888, dealt specifically with these three men. They also appeared in other volumes.

his stories a clarity and succinctness which is lacking in other short story writers of the decadent 'nineties. The narrator of these stories is obviously Kipling, the reporter. As a journalist he enters the story, establishing an intimate relationship with his reader through confidences. The forty stories in this volume are the chatty revelations of a reporter who observes everything about him. When describing things he affects a mood of a man talking casually to a friend. Direct narrator-reader relationship refers the reader to previous tales, as in "In The Pride Of His Youth":

When I was telling you of the joke that The Worm played off on the Senior Subaltern, I promised a somewhat similar tale, but with all the jest left out. Here is that tale.

It is a relationship which had to be established if readers were to look forward to the next issue of the Gazette in order to read Kipling's column. Astringency in words made the action and setting of the story all point toward the coming climax. Although Kipling seldom left the solution of the story to the reader nor used the surprise ending, he managed to show that action was not inevitable, and that it depended upon the characters involved. Characters are shown by their actions; what people do, they are. Occasionally, Kipling centres his main action on a story

within a story.<sup>1</sup> There is no subtlety of plot or characters; rather, there is about his work a straightforwardness of view. It was a view of a journalist whose purpose was to leave nothing in doubt.

Not until he left India did his stories about it become really more vivid. When he arrived in England in 1889, the news of his successful Plain Tales From The Hills had preceded him, and editors were anxious for his work. It is this removal from the immediate scene of his stories which heightened their success. He could look back at India from England and sort out his impressions. His seven years in India made the two main themes in his work of this period. He was able to recall with undisguised delight the expanded horizon he had greeted in 1882 from which he gained freshness and gusto. He could also look back to India as home and become introspective about its values and, since he was Kipling, be quite unsentimental about it.<sup>2</sup> Many of his best stories

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1. A story within a framework was a popular device of early twentieth century writers, particularly Conrad.
  2. 'One of the most remarkable features in all Kipling's work is the absence of sentimentality. The sentimentalist has been shrewdly defined as the man who will not look facts in the face. Kipling, eminently sane and reasonable, positively stares facts out of countenance. But this does not stand in the way of a very human tenderness.' This reflection of Hopkins is strengthened by the majority of Kipling's critics. (R. Thurston-Hopkins, Rudyard Kipling, London, 1930, p. 95.)

were written in this period, and an examination of a few of them points up Kipling's predominant qualities.

"Without Benefit of Clergy",<sup>1</sup> from Life's Handicap, 1891, is a story of an affair between a native girl and an Englishman in which devotion ennobles a sordid situation. Ameera and Holden have dispensed with any wedding ceremony and yet their union is more complete and lasting than many regular marriages. His attitude toward marriage is seen in "In The Pride of His Youth" from Plain Tales From The Hills (written before Kipling's own marriage--an attitude not infrequent in bachelors):

Excepting, always, falling off a horse, there is nothing more fatally easy than marriage before the Registrar. The ceremony costs less than fifty shillings, and is remarkably like walking into a pawn-shop. After the declarations of residence have been put in, four minutes will cover the rest of the proceedings--fees, attestation, and all. Then the Registrar slides the blotting-pad over the names, and says grimly with his pen between his teeth, "Now you're man and wife"; and the couple walk out into the street feeling as if something were horribly illegal somewhere.

But that ceremony holds and can drag a man to his undoing just as thoroughly as the "long as ye both shall live" curse from the altar-rails, with the bridesmaids giggling behind, and "The Voice that breathed o'er Eden" lifting the roof off.

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1. Somerset Maugham says that he would choose this as Kipling's best story; (in a Choice of Kipling's Prose, selected and introduced by Somerset Maugham, London, 1952.)

As in most of the stories there is a moral that the ceremony may be an empty formality which does not insure happiness. Idealization of a non-respectable union is intensified by the heroine who is beautiful and elusive, and whose story cannot be judged by the standards of reality. But the relationship cannot be continued, for respectability and the values of society preach that Holden cannot stay in India with an Indian wife, just as he cannot return to England with her. First the child and then the mother die, and Holden is left with only a memory, for even the house in which they lived is torn down in the name of progress.

Kipling gives the story a strange beauty in the dialogue between Ameera and Holden. Ameera reproaches herself for the child's death:

'Perhaps,' Ameera would say, 'I did not take sufficient heed. Did I, or did I not?...If I had warned him from the sun he might have lived. But Oh, my life, say that I am guiltless! Thou knowest that I loved him, as I love thee. Say that there is no blame on me, or I shall die--I shall die!'

'There is no blame,--before God, none. It was written, and how could we do aught to save? What has been, has been. Let it go, beloved.'

'He was all my heart to me. How can I let the thought go when my arm tells me every night that he is not there? Ahi! Ahi! Oh, Tota, come back to me--come back again, and let us be all together as it was before.'

'Peace, peace! For thine own sake, and for mine also, if thou lovest me--rest.'

'By this I know that thou dost not care; and how shouldst thou? The white men have hearts of stone and souls of iron. Oh, that I had married a man of mine own people--though he beat me--and had never eaten the bread of an alien!'

'Am I an alien--mother of my son?'

'What else--Sahib?...Oh, forgive me--forgive! The death has driven me mad. Thou art the life of my heart, and the light of my eyes, and the breath of my life, and--and I have put thee from me, though it was but for a moment. If thou goest away, to whom shall I look for help? Do not be angry. Indeed, it was the pain that spoke, and not thy slave!'

'I know, I know. We be two who were three. The greater need therefore that we should be one.'

The death of the child deepens the pathos of the story, as does Ameera's vain search for permanence in her life. The idea of strange gods enters the narrative, as well as the dialogue of the story:

The powers were busy on other things. They had allowed thirty million people four years of plenty, wherein men fed well and the crops were certain....

Two months later, Nature began to audit her accounts with a red pencil. On the heels of the spring-reapings came a cry for bread. Then came the cholera from all four quarters of the compass.

This is Kipling's drawing of fate, but he gives it an occult religious connotation--an attitude quite unlike that of his contemporary, Hardy, who dealt with 'chance' and 'Hap'.

Holden and Ameera are in part character-types, the former representing the typical Anglo-Indian army-man, the



latter as his Indian mistress, above others like her because of her devotion and sensitivity. They are more than types, however. Not as complex individuals with peculiar problems do they stay in the reader's memory, but as normal human beings. Holden is remembered as a simple man undergoing the anxiety, joy and sorrow of every lover and father. Ameera, too, represents a universal woman, one who must have her love hidden knowing that it will be lost eventually. They may be types, but they are types resulting from an emotional experience common to all.<sup>1</sup>

Kipling does not tell us what the emotion is which moves his characters, but rather describes it and leaves it. Little incidents--like the baby holding on to his father's hand--are there for this reason. Emotion is expressed by action and dialogue rather than by exposition. Kipling does not tell the reader that he is seeing 'love'; instead, he describes it, and the word for the emotion is formed by the reader. Even the setting unconsciously speaks an emotion. Many writers would have described the last scene of this story as 'desolate and lonely'; Kipling draws the picture:

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1. 'What gives him (Kipling) universal value is his insatiable curiosity about ordinary men and common things.' from Bonamy Dobree, Rudyard Kipling, "Writers and Their Work", London, 1951, p. 22.



He found that the rains had torn down the mud pillars of the gateway, and the heavy wooden gate that had guarded his life hung lazily from one hinge. There was grass three inches high in the courtyard....The tick-tick of the little scorpions as they hurried across the floor was the only sound in the house. Ameera's room and the other one where Tota had lived were heavy with mildew; and the narrow staircase leading to the roof was streaked and stained with rain-borne mud.

The reader is left with the visual image of the place, interpreting for himself the *emotion*.

The eye of a journalist is present here also. There are the newspaper man's trite expressions which sometimes destroy the pathos of the story. Banalities like 'his heart in his mouth', 'she was delighted immensely', 'his blood ran cold', and 'wild with delight', often mar the story. He seems unable to find time to discover an original expression if he already knew a well formed phrase--a habit which he had understandably acquired as a busy reporter with a deadline to meet, and one which he could not miss. It is a journalistic habit, also, to summarize in discussion. The story covers a long period in time of the relationship between Holden and Ameera, and the narrative is linked by a summary of things that have happened in the interval. These explanations, however, do not harm the unity of the story, for they deal with matters concerned with the main plot.

They add to the concrete study of an association between the Indian girl and the Englishman, introducing incidents or bits of dialogue. A picture of the spread of cholera is drawn, and the unity of the story is not disturbed:

It struck a pilgrim-gathering of half a million at a sacred shrine. Many died at the feet of their god; the others broke and ran over the face of the land carrying the pestilence with them. It smote a walled city and killed two hundred a day. The people crowded the trains, hanging on to the foot-boards and squatting on the roofs of the carriages, and the cholera followed them, for at each station they dragged out the dead and the dying. They died by the roadside, and the horses of the Englishmen shied at the corpses in the grass. The Rains did not come, and the earth turned to iron lest man should escape death by hiding in her. The English sent their wives away to the hills and went about their work, coming forward as they were bidden to fill the gaps in the fighting line.

Here Kipling does not become mechanical in style, and gives a grim mental image of the tragedy rather than leave a list of death-statistics and the symptoms of the disease.

For "Without Benefit of Clergy" is a tragedy. Because of the things he had seen in India, Kipling felt that any relationship between two people of different races would invariably fail. The truth of "East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet" was constantly with him. Reality would destroy the permanence of any mixed-race

relationship, just as famine and cholera would retard an India which had flourished for a time. It is as though he felt that behind every excellence--in personal relationships or in the condition of a country--there always would be a destructive influence.

"Without Benefit of Clergy" is the story of the union of two races in India; "At The End of the Passage", from Life's Handicap is a story of Englishmen in India and their reaction to life there. Kipling puts his reader into the heat of an Indian summer:

Four men, each entitled to 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness' sat at a table playing whist. The thermometer marked--for them--one hundred and one degrees of heat. The room was darkened till it was only just possible to distinguish the pips of the cards and the very white faces of the players. A tattered, rotten punkah of whitewashed calico was puddling the hot air and whining dolefully at each stroke....There was neither sky, sun, nor horizon,--nothing but a brown purple haze of heat. It was as though the earth were dying of apoplexy.

From time to time clouds of tawny dust rose from the ground without wind or warning, flung themselves table-cloth-wise among the tops of the parched trees, and came down again. Then a whirling dust-devil would scutter across the plain for a couple of miles, break, and fall outward, though there was nothing to check its flight save a long low line of piled railway-sleepers white with the dust, a cluster of huts made of mud, condemned rails, and canvas and the one squat four roomed bungalow....

The four, stripped to the thinnest of sleeping suits, played whist crossly, with wranglings as to leads and returns.

It is a picture which interests everyone, particularly the staid late-Victorian gentleman at home in England who saw life in India through rose-coloured glasses. Kipling's aim was to show a clear picture of life as he saw it, and not to glorify the Civil Service in India. It could be horrible, and it could be happy; he showed both sides. These first paragraphs are a skilful interweaving of setting and character, hinting at the tragic story behind. Hummil, the host, is overworked and depressed by the solitude and the heat. He goes mad when he sees an image of himself as his only company, and his imagination puts him through a week of severe mental anguish. His friends return to find him dead:

The body lay on its back, hands clinched by the side, as Spurstow had seen it lying seven nights previously. In the staring eyes was written terror beyond the expression of any pen.

Mottram, who had entered behind Lowndes, bent over the dead and touched the forehead lightly with his lips. 'Oh, you lucky, lucky devil! he whispered.

Life in India was not, as many people in England thought, one of aristocratic luxury. The lives of many people were ones of unappreciated sacrifice, and Kipling felt that he should show this. The story has a universal truth. It does not only deal with Englishmen and their idea of India; it also reveals the fact that a place cannot be completely

imagined unless it has been lived in. Too many people romanticize far away places and do not admit that there could be discomfort. Reality soon changes the romantic aura of any place.

When this happens, frequently the character looks back at home and dreams of his life there. "On Greenhow Hill", from Life's Handicap, is a story of England seen through the eyes of one who is in India. Though acceptance of the present is Learoyd's attitude to life, he cannot help but think of the past and dream of the future. This is one of many stories about Learoyd, Ortheris, and Mulvaney who are among Kipling's famous character portraits. This time Learoyd tells his story of home. Memory of it is brought to him as the three men wait to kill a deserter of the army who is hiding in the hills. Learoyd imagines the man's life and, as he does, tells his own story. The plot of the past within a framework of the present action is a favourite device of Kipling's for presenting a story. It begins with the men waiting for the Indian deserter to appear, the story of Learoyd's past is told, and then the present action is completed. Learoyd tells of his love for 'Liza Roantree and how he practically deserted the army for her sake, comparing his life to a supposition of the life the deserter may have had. Unfor-

tunately--or fortunately--'Liza died with Learoyd at her bedside and he was able to return to the army-recruiting station on time:

'Th'recruiting sergeant were waitin' for me at the corner public-house. "Yo've seen your sweetheart?" says he. "Yes, I've seen her," says I. "Well, we'll have a pint now, and you'll do your best to forget her," says he, bein' one o' them smart, bustlin' chaps. "Oy, sergeant," says I. "Forget her." And I've been forgettin' her ever since.'

Kipling, as if the sentiment were too much for him, brings the story back to the present quickly. The deserter is shot:

Seven hundred yards away, and a full hundred down the hillside, the deserter of the Aurangabadis pitched forward, rolled down a red rock, and lay very still, with his face in a clump of blue gentians, while a big raven flapped out of the pine wood to make investigation.

'That's a clean shot, little man,' said Mulvaney.

Learoyd thoughtfully watched the smoke clear away. 'Happen there was a lass tewed up 'wi' him too,' said he.

Ortheris did not reply. He was staring across the valley, with the smile of an artist who looks on the completed work.

If Learoyd is being sentimental, the stark reality of Ortheris balances this element of the story.

This aptitude of taking human emotions to the brink of sentimentality and then stopping short is the high point





of two of Kipling's best stories written in England. In them he shows an awareness of emotion which is not usually credited to the boisterous, army-saga typed Kipling. When he does write of sorrow, love, or strangeness he does it with a delicacy of phrase that shows he was skilled in creating many different moods and emotions.

"'They'", from Traffics and Discoveries, 1904, is a deeply-moving, imaginative story. Kipling wrote this in 1900, two years after his six year old daughter had died of pneumonia. In it, the narrator (Kipling himself<sup>1</sup>) finds a lovely old house in the country where he meets a blind woman who is waiting for, and looking after, 'They'. 'They' are never seen, but their presence is everywhere. The narrator goes to the house three times, as if he had a mysterious power leading him on. He finds a place full of love for children and a place for them to be happy, and when he leaves for the last time, he knows that he will not return. The story implies that there is a special place for children where warmth and childish happiness exist, and it is a comfort for Kipling, who has lost his own child, to feel this.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Kipling is always the narrator in his stories, whether or not they are written in the first or third person. He may put his ideas into the mouths of others, but always his presence is there.
  2. Hilton Brown comments on the varied reception given to "'They'". It was undoubtedly a departure from the usual Kipling story, but it is written with his usual finesse.



By small details the narrator discovers that the children are there, though he does not see them. A laugh is heard from the garden, footsteps are heard on the floor, and a room is found with toys scattered around as though the playing children had just left them there. The narrator does not understand exactly what is going on until:

The little brushing kiss fell in the centre of my palm--as a gift on which the fingers were, once, expected to close; as the all-faithful, half-reproachful signal of a waiting child not used to neglect even when grownups were busiest--a fragment of the mute code devised very long ago.

Then he receives the message that there is a happy place for children who die. It is mysterious, but full of a tender truth.

This quality of mystery was the supernatural in the famous story, "The Brushwood Boy", from the volume, The Day's Work, published in 1898. It is based on the theme of two people who systematically have the same dreams. These dreams have an almost uncanny resemblance to their own lives, and they fall in love with each other knowing that they should do so because they have been dreaming about each other all their lives. Besides having this rather weak core as the main part of the plot

the story is lacking in other strengths.<sup>1</sup> It attempts to cover a twenty-year period, not by the flashback technique, but by a series of incidents and summaries of action. The scene is shifted from the nursery to a public school, to Oxford, to Sandhurst, to India, to a ship at sea, and finally to an English house and grounds. Each of these places has a group of characters, the only one remaining common to all being the main character, George Cottar. The material is so massive that there is little concrete action or dialogue. In "Without Benefit of Clergy" Kipling could summarize through action, but here there is too much material with which to do this. Though incidents enter the summary, they are much too long and appear too often. The dreams and the summaries are too obvious and become monotonous, being needlessly enlarged by a great deal of repetition. The love scene at the end of the story is not worth the long explanations before it. The 'happy' couple relate their dreams, realize that they love each other, and the story is ended.

At the crises in his life, George dreams of the girl he wishes to marry, the girl he has sat beside in

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1. Somerset Maugham feels that these dreams are an 'essential interest of the story' and are described with 'felicity'. Compared with the hard actualities of other stories, however, this sequence sifts through my fingers.

the theatre, and the girl who will come to him as a fairy-princess. These dreams do not fit into the other parts of George's character presented. He is a superlative individual, excelling in everything he does, devoting himself to the army and remaining popular with his men because of his matter-of-fact attitude and his practical qualities. It is surprising that such an individual should be so shy with women, and when looking for a wife, rely so completely on his dreams. But this is Kipling's point. It is not credible, however; if he had shown a romantic interior behind the external facade of George, then the dreaming would be believable. But he does not do this, and George fails as a character portrayal. Miriam, the girl with whom he falls in love (or thinks he does), is not painted any more completely when she does appear than she is in the shadowy detail of the dream. The characters in this story are not individuals, much less types. Even the minor characters, who in other stories stand out clearly, are drawn in a sketchy manner, reminiscent of pantomime types.

The story does have its good points, however. It shows Kipling's new delight in England with its associations of beauty in the countryside and home:

Georgie headed for his own country, wild with delight of the first long furlough after the lean seasons. Nothing was changed in that

orderly life, from the coachman who met him at the station to the white peacock that stormed at the carriage from the stone wall above the shaven lawns. The house took toll of him with due regard to precedence--first the mother; then the father; then the housekeeper, who wept and praised God; then the butler; and so on down to the under-keeper, who had been dog-boy in Georgie's youth, and called him 'Master Georgie', and was reproved by the groom who had taught Georgie to ride.

The story illustrates Kipling's steady hand in picturing the life of an Indian officer:

The regular working of the Empire shifted his world to India, where he tasted utter loneliness in subaltern's quarters--one room and one bullock-trunk--and, with his mess, learned the new life from the beginning.

It dawned on him that a regiment in India was nearer the chance of active service than he had conceived, and that a man might as well study his profession. A Major of the new school backed this idea with enthusiasm, and he and Cottar accumulated a library of military works, and read and argued and disputed far into the night. But the Adjutant said the old thing: "Get to know your men, young'un, and they'll follow you anywhere. That's all you want--know your men."

The characteristic charm of life from a child's point of view is present here also:

The movements of the grown-ups, whom Georgie tolerated, but did not pretend to understand, removed his world, when he was seven years old, to a place called 'Oxford-on-a-visit'. Here were huge buildings surrounded by vast prairies, with streets of infinite length, and above all, something called the 'buttery'

which Georgie was dying to see, because he knew it must be greasy, and therefore delightful. He perceived how correct were his judgements when his nurse led him through a stone arch into the presence of an enormously fat man, who asked him if he would like some bread and cheese. Georgie was used to eating all round the clock, so he took some brown liquid called 'auditale', but that his nurse led him away...

Kipling's interest in children was to carry him into one of his most important phases: the period of writing for and about children. In 1894-95 the Jungle Books came out, followed by Just So Stories in 1902. The most effective of these books, however, were Puck of Pook's Hill in 1906, and Rewards and Fairies in 1910, for they were written for adults as well as for children. Each consists of a sequence of short stories in which the children, Una and Dan, are entertained by stories told by people of history or legend who meet them in a secret wood near their Sussex home, always introduced by the English fairy, Puck, 'alias Robin Goodfellow, alias Nick o'London, alias Lob-Lie-by-the-Fire, the last survivor in England of those whom mortals call Fairies'.

When examining these stories, one sees four mental levels. There is the present plane of Dan's and Una's interpretation of the story as the history of the past. Puck can look at history through the eyes of one who has seen the present turn into the past of centuries. The narrator sees his

story only in relationship to his own time. A fourth level is the universal truth which can be related to all time units. In Something of Myself, Kipling refers to this quality in these children's books:

I worked the material in three or four overlaid tints and textures, which might or might not reveal themselves according to the shifting light of sex, youth, and experience. The tales had to be read by children, before people realized that they were meant for grownups.

Kipling uses the secret corner of the farm, and Dan's and Una's comments as the framework for the historical episodes. Neither is the focal point of the stories, nor are the incidents nor the characters who relate them. All join together to give a picture of the England Kipling loved. England and her people, the civilisation which had survived a multitude of revolutions, is the focus of the story. Kipling felt that his readers could love England only if they knew the past and could feel the continuity of it. His respect for England had been created by many factors. He was born away from it and returned as a child, only to leave again in his formative teens. After living in India, he travelled widely and settled for a time in the United States, but each time he returned to the 'old country', his respect for it grew. He could see England through the eyes of one who had been away; and there is



no greater appreciation of a country than by one who does not take it for granted. He learned to appreciate it, and could see things which no Englishman always living in England could see. He had made comparisons; now he could understand more fully what had made England great. He recognised that change would always be with mankind, and once the change was in process, it must be accepted. A great majority of the stories deal with change: the last stand of the Romans when they were threatened by the Danes and the Picts, the Teutonic gods ousted by Christianity, the discovery of the New World, and the Norman conquest. And in each of these studies of change, a glimpse of a better future is given.

In design the stories are the same. Each is introduced or finished with a verse which is related to the inner story (the most famous of these poems is the much quoted "If.."). The children appear and from something they are doing, the story arises. Puck appears and introduces the person who is going to tell the story. As they leave the episode, a perpetual spell is cast over Dan and Una so that they will not tell what they have seen, but will remember it when they come again to the secret wood.

Here, the characters are not types, but true individuals. By small incidents, gestures and actions, they



come alive as do no other characters created by Kipling. They are many sided and very human, more interesting for their datelessness. One of the best examples of this is in the portrait of Queen Elizabeth I who is a human being in Kipling's story, and not the domineering woman of the history book. Rather than tell the reader that 'she was a Latin scholar', Kipling gives her words on the subject:

'Norgen village loyally entertains her with a masque or play, and a Latin oration spoken by the parson, for whose false quantities, if I'd made 'em in my girlhood, I should have been whipped.'

Her cleverness is applied to her dancing. She tells Una that she should learn to dance:

'It gives a woman alone among men or her enemies time to think how she shall win--or lose. A woman can only work in man's playtime. Heigho!'

After acting a sketch for the children, she proves that she can dance:

She took off her cloak slowly, and stood forth in dove-coloured satin, worked over with pearls that trembled like running water in the running shadows of the trees. Still talking--more to herself than to the children--she swam into a majestic dance of the stateliest balancings, the haughtiest wheelings and turnings aside, the most dignified sinkings, the gravest risings, all joined together by the elaboratest interlacing steps and circles.

Not only does this erase the monotony of the general descriptions of a history book, but it brings life to characters long since dead.

Authenticity in character portrayal does not end with famous historical people. The picture of Philadelphia Bucksteed who is dying of 'consumption' and does not know it, is especially well done:

Her cheeks were pale except for two pretty pink patches in the middle, and she talked with little gasps at the end of her sentences, as though she had been running.

The two men who love her cannot tell her the truth of her illness, and when she sings a song about death and they cry over it, her childlike vanity makes her believe it is because she has sung so well:

"My dear, if I hadn't seen it, I shouldn't have believed that I could have drawn tears, genuine tears, to the eyes of four grown men. But I did, Rene simply couldn't endure it! He's all French sensibility. He hid his face and said, 'Assez Mademoiselle! C'est plus fort que moi! Assez! While Dad sat with the tears simply running down his cheeks."

"And what did Dr. Break do?"

"He got up and pretended to look out at the window, but I saw his fat shoulders jerk as if he had the hiccoughs. That was a triumph. I never suspected him of sensibility.

Here the inner emotions of all the characters are revealed by the statements of a girl who does not realize what she

is saying. This is perhaps the most difficult way to expose character, but it is the most rewarding if it is done successfully, as Kipling does it here.

As a journalist, Kipling learned the technical role of a direct observer, and wrote about the details of machines as though he had invented them. This ability is shown when he describes the articles of the past. By recording them in the words of his characters, they gather an authenticity of their own. The picture of the first compass is especially well done:

In the brown box was a blue bowl with red marks upon the rim, and within the bowl, hanging from a fine thread, was a piece of iron no thicker than that grass stem, and as long, maybe, as my spur, but straight. In this iron, said Witta, abode the Evil Spirit which Kitai, the yellow man, had brought by Art Magic out of his own country that lay three years' journey southward. The Evil Spirit strove day and night to return to his country, and therefore, look you, the iron needle pointed continually to the South.

In these two books Kipling combined the predominant characteristics of his previous stories. As short stories, they are his best. Plot, character, and setting are well developed and equally important. As volumes of short stories they are in a well-wrought design, and this does not end with the volume. Each story, as has been seen, is

particularly well-balanced, and can be considered fine on its own. The reason for this excellence can be traced to two explanations. Firstly, he had been writing stories for some time and now could produce something which was well-turned. Secondly, he was a part of these stories himself. Because he had a contempt for school history books, he wanted history to live for his own children, and he put his best into pleasing them. His children had inspired him to do his best.

As the years went by, Kipling wrote fewer stories, but when he did they were an elaboration on the themes and concepts of the earlier ones. There is no essential difference between the stories of the first and last periods. Stylistically they are the same since they are constructed inside some framework. He establishes an impetus for the story and then tells it in a straight-forward fashion, frequently using the past tense, and recollection on the part of the 'story-teller', as his favourite devices. The best stories of this latter period use the Masonic Lodge meetings as a background.

The best example of this is in "A Madonna of the Trenches", from Debits and Credits, published in 1926. Strangwick (the play on the word 'strange' shows again Kipling's use of name association with an abstract charac-

teristic) appears at the Masonic Lodge in a nervous and confused state. Under the supervision of a Dr. Keede,<sup>1</sup> he tells his story about the shattering experiences of war. The soldier recalls, under drugs, a time in which he believed that he saw his dead aunt talking to his uncle on the battlefield on the day that she died. This episode had made the nephew the mental wreck that he was. When he had faced his emotional problem after a mental catharsis, he was ready to face life again.

The plot of this story is a summation of Kipling's ideas on life, and shows completely that his basic values were the same during his long writing career. The young man searches for a place in society.<sup>2</sup> He goes to the lodge

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1. Like Mrs. Hauksbee in the Indian stories, Dr. Keede reappears in the lodge stories. Kipling frequently re-introduced people in his stories. There are the three school boys in Stalky and Co., who emerge again in stories in A Diversity of Creatures, 1917, ("Regulus"), and in Debits and Credits, 1926, ("The United Idolators", "The Propagation of Knowledge"). Mr. Pyecroft is a predominant character in Traffics and Discoveries, appearing in four of the eleven stories. In "The Edge of Evening", from A Diversity of Creatures, we meet again the hero of "The Captive", from Traffics and Discoveries, 1904.
  2. Bonamy Dobree expounds on the 'loneliness of the individual' as a main theme in Kipling's work. He does not, however, bring this to its conclusion. Individual loneliness is a main theme, but it is carried out as a distinct search of the character to belong to something stable in society--a search for security.

because it is something to which he can belong. Man should not be an 'outsider', but should feel like a cog in a machine. Isolation of the individual from society is not man's natural destiny, for the importance of human patterns lies in the concept of belonging to something. The boy in one of Kipling's first stories, "Baa, Baa, Black Sheep", felt rejected because his family had put him into a harsh foster home, and he was unhappy because he did not feel that he belonged there. The frame of the Masonic group to which the soldier goes for help is an enlargement of Kipling's early ideas;<sup>1</sup> Strangwick can face his problem once he has found stable roots and familiarity in the lodge functions he remembered, just as the boy can be happy (in "Baa, Baa, Black Sheep") when his parents return to take him away from his unhealthy foster-environment. The vehicle of psychoanalysis to bring the soldier to tell his story is Kipling's only concession to 'modernity' in his writing. The basic concepts are the same as they were in the beginning of his career; they are only enlarged and strengthened.

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1. Throughout his career he was interested in groups and their effect on the individual as part of that group. Man needs something to which he can belong, for in belonging he grows emotionally and develops a distinct personality. The two volumes of stories concerned with groups of people are: Stalky and Co., of the three school boys; and Soldiers Three, of the three privates.



The most obvious difference between the early and later Kipling is in his attitude toward his reader. In the first volume of stories, Plain Tales From The Hills, 1888, there is the intimate relationship of reader-writer, strengthened by anagrams and chatty asides. The tone in these forty stories is almost gossipy, reflecting the original aim of the stories to amuse the readers of the Civil and Military Gazette. Here the narrator is Kipling, the journalist, discussing the social life in India with an eye toward entertainment. The chatty association slowly changed. In Life's Handicap, 1891, the journalist is still present, but he is more outside the realm of his character's experiences. Kipling was back in England by this time; though the stories are about India, his role has changed. Fifteen of the twenty-seven stories are told in the first person; the others are told by the same narrator, but the tone is quieter for his interest was moving toward the story he was telling rather than in the reader-writer relationship. He had a reading public now; therefore, he could focus his attention on the story itself. The mature Kipling was emerging, a Kipling who was writing stories such as "At the End of the Passage", "Without Benefit of Clergy", "Georgie Porgie", stories written in the third-person minus the clever asides. Occasionally he returned to the chatty quality of Plain Tales From The Hills,



as in "A Walking Delegate" from The Day's Work, 1898. In this volume, however, his attitude is more assured and consequently there is less of a gossip-like tone. Only four of these thirteen stories have Kipling obviously present; the rest are by a much quieter and more astute observer. He seems to be chatty with his reader only when he is introducing a new scene as a framework for his stories. "A Walking Delegate" is his first story of Vermont. Once the reader knew the environment Kipling was describing, the apparent intimate tone was gone. Henceforth, he relied on his story to captivate the reader, a story casually told but strongly displayed. In Traffics and Discoveries, 1904, he strengthened this change. When he is obviously present, it is only because of his association with the main character of the story, usually the person who is the focal point of the episode. Mr. Pyecroft tells his stories after the outside narrator has prodded him; Kipling is there only because of his friendship with Pyecroft. In one story from this volume, "A Sahib's War", the narrator is a Sikh, but his observations are those of Kipling. A Diversity of Creatures, 1917, is the only lapse from Kipling's trend to be outside his stories. In Debits and Credits, 1926, the first stories of the Masonic Lodge appeared in volume form, and Kipling is present

only because of his action in the story. The authenticity of the situations is strengthened by his presence, and he restrains himself from commenting unnecessarily. Once the main focus is reached, Kipling disappears completely as a character, but his presence is felt because the tone and observations made are those of Kipling, the reporter. In his last volume of stories, Limits and Renewals, 1932, Kipling is only present in the stories pertaining to the lodge and the ones concerning the lives of his friends ("The Tender Achilles", "Dayspring Mishandled", "Unprofessional") and in one other story, "Aunt Ellen". The other ten stories are told in the third person. It was not necessary for him to relate himself as directly to his reader as he did in his early stories. With an assured public, his attention was focussed instead on the story he was telling. His best stories are those where he is on the outside, omnipresent, and assured.

But though the latter Kipling is not a different Kipling, he is, in many ways, a better Kipling. No longer is he obvious to a point where the reader's intelligence is insulted. There are no clever anagrams to point out the moral or meaning of the story. A common framework in his earlier stories was the meeting of men over cigars

and liqueurs after dinner where one told a story--an obvious device! By using the lodge in his latter stories, Kipling weaves a much more interesting plot for the framework itself attracts our attention and cannot be classed as verbiage merely to introduce a 'tale'. He had gained a subtlety which, when combined with the acute observations of a journalist, could make a very good story.

It is time for a reappraisal of the short stories of Rudyard Kipling. Unfortunately, the trend of the 1950s is similar to that of the 1920s when Kipling's reputation had fallen due to a cynicism and a type of cleverness which demanded something more abstract than Kipling gave. His stories are of ordinary people in simple situations. There is no involvement of character and plot as in Sons and Lovers which epitomizes the attitude of the 'twenties, or the 'angry young man' jargon of today which makes the 'fifties appear fraudulent to many people. He may be trite, but the people he wrote about were ordinary, and simplicity was their life. Often the essence of a situation is expressed in a trite statement; simple ways often breed contempt, but originality frequently leads to the perverse.

Kipling is primarily a journalist, and this is the

key to his achievement. His newspaper training taught him to eliminate things and also sharpened his eye for detail. He often attacked ideas, but this changed from the direct to the slanting attack. This is the only shift in his technique and attitude throughout his career. He is not great as a character delineator or as a philosopher, as a writer conscious of form, or as an intellectual. Rather he is great as an observer of the vivid and the concrete, and in things which are humanly interesting. It may be a world without a Hamlet, but it is a world complete with an intense and vital energy which has, for even the most worldly-wise, a sincere emotional appeal.

### Chapter Three: Katherine Mansfield

### Katherine Mansfield

The stories of Katherine Mansfield show a growth to wider sensibility and surer technique. She deliberately cultivated a deeper perception, trying to see in objects around her what other people not equipped with this sensibility were unable to comprehend. It was not that the events and things which she saw were different from those seen by others, but that her personality gave to them a modified emphasis. Katherine Mansfield gradually adopted throughout her life the philosophy that in order to be 'whole' one must search for truth in all things. In the last four years of her life this search for truth was intensified by the awareness of her impending death:

Don't I live in glimpses only (she wrote in April, 1921)? There is something wrong, there is something small in such a life. One must live more fully and one must have more power of loving and feeling. One must be true to one's vision of life--in every single particular--and I am not. The only thing to do is to try again from tonight to be stronger and better--to be whole.<sup>1</sup>

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1. The Letters of Katherine Mansfield, edited by J. Middleton Murry, Volume 11, London, 1928, p. 381.

This attempt to achieve wholeness in her life is reflected in her stories.<sup>1</sup> She became acutely concerned with the truth of a situation, and this truth is anchored in a personal vision of human behaviour. At times this personal aspect became almost too subtle in the selection of certain images or incidents. This is due to the fact that she started with one particular and the representative aspects indirectly emerged. As a result of her organization of detail, Katherine Mansfield related her stories to the pattern of human behaviour by implication. Despite the personal concept, there is always some degree of universality, however implicit, associated to the particular episodes she selected for presentation. By induction, she moved from the particular to the general; the reader moves with her and discovers the theme--if there is a conscious one. Usually, however, the theme is hidden and emerges only after careful analysis. Often, it is difficult to say exactly what idea lies behind her stories. Frequently her primary aim seems to be the painting of a specific situation--with the addition of the Mansfield vision--not as it may appear to be but as it is. Her short stories are not those in which the plot

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1. 'The problem (the search for truth) that Katherine Mansfield faced was essentially a problem of her generation, not to be understood by those who came before or, presumably, by those who will come after': David Daiches, "Katherine Mansfield and the Search for Truth", The Novel and the Modern World, Chicago, 1939, p. 68.



dominates and the story seeks to illustrate a particular point. They are rather concerned with how the experience of a certain situation weakens, strengthens, or changes personality and the individual's place in his own immediate society. This type of story was often a reaction against the over-emphasis on accepted traditional forms of literature which were not sufficiently objective for Katherine Mansfield. She was concerned with her own vision of life,<sup>1</sup> and in her work interested mainly in the subtle shadowings of character synthesis.

Katherine Mansfield's first volume of short stories, In A German Pension, was published in December, 1911. Though extremely overwritten and immature, it foreshadows the later stories and contains many of the elements which one associates with a Mansfield story. There is the strong sense of loneliness, and the painful incongruity of man's behaviour--questions which dominate her later stories. This sense of loneliness is derived from the conscious use of

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1. 'Katherine Mansfield to a degree almost unparalleled in English fiction put her own experiences into her stories. She wrote of nothing that did not directly happen to her, even when she appeared to be at her most imaginative and fanciful': Ian A. Gordon, "Katherine Mansfield", in the Writers and Their Work series, London, 1955, p. 7. (This statement is a sweeping one, but if she had not immediately experienced these things, she had known the people who had. She could not write about something about which she did not know a great deal; she was always intimately concerned with her subject.)

the narrator, the real Katherine Mansfield trying to fit into the life of a small hotel in a German resort town. This is her own experience recorded in a first volume of stories. Later on she did away with the first-person narrator, but her most successful stories are those which are related to her own past, or very immediate, experience. There is the introspective Katherine Mansfield, sitting apart from the action--an elusive person, as she then pictured herself--writing down her observations which are sharp, clear, and frequently accentuated with a witty remark. These remarks ring false and often destroy the intended tone of the story. Remarks such as 'tableau grandissimo', at the end of the story about the dress-maker's daughter who posed as the sister of a baroness, are quite unnecessary and pointless, and in this case detract from an otherwise fine conclusion. It is overwriting and is insulting to the reader; the mood and problems of the story are easily conveyed to the reader by the outline and tone already woven into the story. From experience she was quick to learn the value of simplicity, but she was still under the influence of Wilde and his scintillating asides, and the Symbolists with their interests in decadent exotics.<sup>1</sup> When she purged

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1. She kept a notebook of quotations she had copied from Wilde, and from Mallarmé and company. Though she always respected these men, their influence is only seen in her early work.

herself of the first-person narrator,<sup>1</sup> and became concerned with various levels of character analysis, simplicity in statement and technique was to be her guide.

In the German sketches, Katherine Mansfield is firstly interested in the immediate and usually uncomplicated situation. Episode and character are drawn with swift strokes by complex but perfectly executed dialogue, and quick minor action. She is not impersonal, however, and she focuses her attention completely on the scene as it is observed by the first-person narrator. Indeed, the major limitation to these stories is that the narrator is present too much. There is the intrusion of the precocious commentator; and there is a superciliousness easily recognized here as the British (or New Zealand) narrator condemns the life in the German boarding house, things which have been adequately condemned by the very episodes selected for presentation. Pointed out to the reader is the ignorant and conceited German personality; the domestic values consist of material comforts and a substantial income; and it is clear that the German is

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I. 'Katherine Mansfield is the unseen and unspeaking personality behind every page she wrote...Few writers have successfully imitated her extremely personal method; many have followed her example in squeezing the significance out of the apparently commonplace, trivial behaviour of their fellow men': H. E. Bates, The Modern Short Story, London, 1941, p. 126. All critics endorse this statement.

mainly concerned with the physical processes.<sup>1</sup> Of the stories printed in In A German Pension, a few require more notice than others: "The-Child-Who-Was-Tired", "The Sister of the Baroness", "The Modern Soul", and "A Birthday".

"The-Child-Who-Was-Tired" corresponds remarkably to the story, "Sleepyhead", by Chekhov. The parallelism has been carefully examined by Elisabeth Schneider who attributes the similarity to unconscious remembrance.<sup>2</sup> Katherine Mansfield was later to receive many ideas from Chekhov, and it is probable that she consciously borrowed the idea for this story. The main theme, of the abused maid who fixes her mind on the crying of the baby who keeps her awake and then smothers it, is similar to that of the Chekhov story. Here the similarity ends, but it is interesting that she chose this idea at a time when she had just lost her baby by a miscarriage.<sup>3</sup> The tone

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1. It is interesting to note that when, in 1914, Katherine Mansfield was asked to republish this book because the publisher felt that the sales would be high because of the war, she refused because she thought the stories artistic failures.
  2. Elisabeth Schneider, "Katherine Mansfield and Chekhov", Modern Language Notes, June, 1935, p. 394.
  3. Ruth Mantz (in her Life of Katherine Mansfield, London, 1933, p. 327.) says that "The-Child-Who-Was-Tired" is 'Mansfield's first effort to translate the experience of life into a form of art'. The loss of her child was the first of many tragic circumstances in her life, and frequently she transferred them to her stories.

of the story is one of despair--and perhaps even guilt, for she had lost her child after severe physical exertion, a thing which her doctor had warned her against.

"The Sister of the Baroness" is a story whose main concern is with plot. Visitors to the hotel include the daughter of the baroness (who is dumb and cannot explain) and a woman who says that she is the baroness's sister. Everyone is fascinated by her, and thoughtful to her because she is a member of the aristocracy. With fine dialogue and amusing choice of detail, it is learned that the 'sister' is really the dressmaker's daughter. As an example of a plot-story with a surprise ending, this story is admirably executed.

"The Modern Soul" is a rejection of the ideals of those who are primarily concerned with 'art for art's sake' on the outside, but who, under careful examination, reveal the sham of their situation. Here the Mansfield gift of entertaining satire is displayed--a gift which ranks high among her abilities. It is most abundant in the early arrogant years, and adds an astringent quality to many of her later stories. Often this satire is directed against the poseurs in artistic circles and culminates in characters like Raoul Duquette and Mr. Reginald Peacock. "The Modern Soul" is the forerunner of these studies of sham

artists, and is in itself an excellent picture of this part of society, told by Mansfield in a penetrating, almost malicious, way. The arrogant and elusive monologist, Sonia, hating her mother and finally disdaining convention, runs away with the 'Herr Professor' who is twice her age. The false values of her society had been exposed, but her life with the professor will be a continuation of the same existence.

Here the subject matter of the stories is closely related to Katherine Mansfield's immediate emotional situation. The relationship of mother and daughter in "The Modern Soul" is one example of Mansfield's constant interest in mother-daughter relationships, for her own association with her mother had been under many tensions, particularly when she left New Zealand to live in London. She had gone to Germany to have a child, and the concern with child-birth is present not only in "A Birthday" (which will be discussed later) but in "Frau Fischer", "Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding" and "At Lehmann's".

At this stage in her career, two main characteristics appear which were to become marked parts of her style. Firstly, there is the charm which lies in the fresh and exact detail of her phrasing. With a natural talent for the vivid phrase, she found new ways of ex-



pressing things. By using colourful, atmosphere-evoking metaphors and adjectives, she gave to her work an exquisite flawless quality. Phrases like 'still the solitary little figure, head bowed as though under the weight of the spectacles', 'she had the air of having been perpetually washed with a blue bag', and 'the room seemed to change into a great glass bowl that spun round' abound in her work, giving to it a finely detailed quality similar to that found in paintings of the Dutch School.

This is a period of experiment for Katherine Mansfield, and her attitude toward her work is neither defined as a tangible part of her stories, nor is it referred to in her journals and letters of the period. There is, however, a growth in her method of drawing characters--the combination of external and internal synthesis which was to be the dominant characteristic of her work. Her stories are successful because of the way the thoughts and personality of the main characters are drawn. In "A Birthday", 1911, there is transference from external action to that of internal experience. As Andreas Binzer waits for his child to be born, his thoughts quickly move about. His reactions to the whole of life are shown: his courtship with his wife, his immediate situation in waiting, and his dreams of the future as he envisages his



wife and child dead. The treatment is stilted, for Mansfield depends upon quotation marks for thoughts, introducing phrases such as 'he reflected' or 'he thought'. It is internal synthesis, but not pure 'stream-of-consciousness'. Often she wrote her stories with three time levels--memories of the past, thoughts of the immediate present, and dreams of the future--as was seen in "A Birthday". "The Tiredness of Rosabel", written in 1908 when Katherine Mansfield was twenty, is remarkable because it was not until much later that she used the method of internal synthesis in describing character as successfully again. It is easily associated with her writing of ten years after. Perhaps it was an unconscious act on the part of Mansfield, but the girl's mind is seen:

Westbourne Grove looked as she had always imagined Venice to look at night, mysterious, dark, even the hansoms were like gondolas dodging up and down, and the lights trailing luridly--tongues of flame licking the wet street--magic fish swimming in the Grand Canal. She was more than glad to reach Richmond Road, but from the corner of the street until she came to No. 26 she thought of those four flights of stairs. Oh, why four flights! It was really criminal to expect people to live so high up. Every house ought to have a lift, something simple and inexpensive, or else an electric staircase like the one at Earl's Court--but four flights! When she stood in the hall and saw the first flight ahead of her and the stuffed albatross head on the landing, glimmering ghost-like in the light of the little gas jet,

she almost cried. Well, they had to be faced; it was very like bicycling up a steep hill, but there was not the satisfaction of flying down the other side.

Rosabel in the past is seen selling hats in the shop that afternoon, and in the present making her tea in her one room, while she dreams of a future in which she will have a magnificent home and many hats to wear. The whole effect is somewhat shattered by the moral which Mansfield inserts at the end about 'that tragic optimism, which is all too often the only inheritance of youth'. She was soon to put off these lapses, and to sustain a positive style.

Her search for an adequate style and means of expression can be equated to her personal search in life--the search for a complete self which she could understand. Her byword for life eventually became 'acceptance'--acceptance of life for what it is. Her personal relationships were constantly betrayed by disorientation and a desire for emotional security. Frequently this led her into cynicism and self-conceit which not only made her writing unoriginal, but filled it with private emotionalism. The central theme of her stories up to this time is closely related to her own life.<sup>1</sup> It is the theme of the exact

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1. Seven of the thirteen stories in this volume are written in the first-person--and it is obvious from the context that the narrator is Mansfield herself. The other six, though in the third-person, are toned with Mansfield's personality.

and careful female recoiling from the dominance of the male, and the realization that the reality of a situation never lives up to the expectation. For a while, she was too much a part of her stories. Only when she had the genuine reflection of one who sees the good and bad in the past, could it be a firm foundation for a successful story.

Until 1912, however, Katherine Mansfield was not a master of her art. In In A German Pension her approach is too direct and the themes too obvious. The indirect approach is something which she utilizes in her mature work. She learned by experience that the successful handling of a story depends as much upon omission as upon statement. To let the reader gradually discover this personal quality of a theme, rather than to be told it, heightens the story's appeal. Katherine Mansfield's first lessons had been well learned; now she was ready to explore the subtleties of human behaviour.

She began to contribute stories to Rhythm, a esoteric magazine interested in all creative arts, which was edited by Michael Sadleir and John Middleton Murry.<sup>1</sup> The aim of Rhythm was to bring to the public, through a monthly

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1. She later met Murry, soon began living with him, and they were eventually married in 1918 after she was divorced from her first husband.

publication, 'eternal art'. It was particularly concerned with things violent in the creative world which, the editors felt, reflected contemporary society. It soon became evident that Mansfield, because of her growing relationship with Murry, had more than a contributor's connection with the magazine; her work was in every issue, and when Rhythm became The Blue Review, she became the assistant editor.<sup>1</sup>

Katherine Mansfield's contribution of stories to these magazines falls into three separate categories. There are the two stories concerned with children and their innocence; the three mystery pieces: "The Woman at the Store", "Millie" and "Ole Underwood", which deal with New Zealand and were written especially to conform to the aims of violence for Rhythm; and the tales of satire which appeared in The Blue Review as Epilogues 1-111 in May, June and July of 1913.<sup>2</sup>

In the stories of children there are the beginnings of the style and thought which were to culminate in

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1. She replaced Michael Sadleir. Because of financial troubles and the difficulty in finding adequate offices, Rhythm stopped for two months and reappeared as The Blue Review, now more concerned with literature than with illustrations. (It had firstly printed sketches by new artists--one of them, Picasso.)
  2. These later reappeared with individual titles: "Pension Sequin", "Violet" and "Bains Turcs" respectively.

"Prelude" and the later New Zealand stories. Later, she was to admit that these stories were, in substance, related to her own past and immediate family. The style is that of intimate conversation with no distinct plot; rather, it is the thoughts of various people on a specific incident. The connecting link in these stories is the theme of the different reactions to a given event. She stresses the search for an individuality which is not impinged upon by others--a right which even a small child should expect and have. The idea is not drawn because she wishes her readers to feel the philosophical assertion that 'the child is father of the man', but rather that she wants to explain that the wishes and innocent actions of a child should be respected, and that the child should not be punished by misunderstanding parents who look down upon these actions only because they are the actions of children. In "New Dresses" the problem is well drawn and the reader is brought into the mind of Helen, the child who does not want to wear a dress identical to the one worn by her sister. The latter appears to the adult world as a good child but is, in reality, the monster of the piece. Helen's hostility is transferred to hiding the dress which she accidentally, or in unconscious deliberation, tore. Her sensitivity is noted by the grandmother and the family doctor, but only misunderstanding

comes from the parents, Henry and Anne. The dress is found and Helen is punished, prodded on to rash statements by her sister, Rose:

Henry visited their bedroom the last thing. She heard him come creaking into their room and hid under the bedclothes. But Rose betrayed her.

"Helen's not asleep", piped Rose.

Henry sat by the bedside pulling his moustache.

"If it were not Sunday, Helen, I would whip you. As it is, and I must be at the office early to-morrow, I shall give you a sound smacking after tea in the evening...Do you hear me?"

She grunted.

"You love your mother and father, don't you?"

No answer.

Rose gave Helen a dig with her foot.

"Well," said Henry, sighing deeply, "I suppose you love Jesus?"

"Rose has scratched my leg with her toe-nail," answered Helen.

Henry strode out of the room and flung himself on to his own bed with his outdoor boots on the starched bolster, Anne noticed, but he was too overcome for her to venture a protest. The old woman was in the bedroom, too, idly combing the hairs from Anne's brush. Henry told them the story, and was gratified to observe Anne's tears.

"It is Rose's turn for her toe-nails after the bath next Saturday," commented the old woman.

The character of the doctor changes radically at the end of the story and disturbs the natural flow of his portrayal. Up to this time he has been a sympathetic watcher of Helen's predicament. He and the grandmother seem to be the only ones who understand her. At the end, however, the doctor com-



pletely misinterprets the grandmother's feelings of sympathy for Helen. It is a change which does not logically follow his previous words and actions; the story is ended in an uncertain tone. This quality of uncertainty was to be eliminated in the later New Zealand family stories by the confining of example and the tightening of focus. Katherine Mansfield was still too closely connected with her unhappy past; her attitude toward her family and her childhood was to soften into the charm of her later stories.<sup>1</sup> "The Little Girl" is more obviously related to the New Zealand stories because of the use of the name Kezia, who is one of the main characters in the other stories. Again there is the concern with the parent-child relationship, but this time the father is drawn more sympathetically and the story ends somewhat sentimentally, but shows that some degree of understanding has been established between the father and daughter:

"What's the matter?" asked father. "Another dream?"

"Oh," said the little girl, "my head's on your heart; I can hear it going. What a big heart you've got, father dear."

There is a warmth here, and the characters emerge with force. The fault in these two stories lies in the lack of a sense

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1. Ian A. Gordon believes that Mansfield's best stories are those written with a New Zealand background. This appraisal is taken by most of her critics.



of place. Though there is nothing regional here to relate the setting to New Zealand, there is also no pervading sense of universality which could relate the story to any place.

The three New Zealand murder tales, however, do accord a sense of place. Here, conflicting characters are related to their environment. Dealing with crime and insanity, the action is a reaction against the atmosphere of the New Zealand backwoods. The woman of the title in "The Woman at the Store" is one who has been removed to the country from a busy coastal town. Her husband wanders and occasionally returns, leaving her alone with their child. Her loneliness, the heat and the dust, eventually drive her to kill her husband. When the story begins, this action has been done, but Mansfield creates the restless mood, and the crime is revealed by the child's drawings. Like the surroundings, the story is stark and firm; the tone is completely objective and the relentless quality of the raw New Zealand backwoods is strongly maintained. Revealed in "Ole Underwood" is the obsessed mind of a society-abandoned sailor who has been released from prison after spending twenty years there for the murder of his wife; he is an outcast of colonial society and belongs to, yet is destroyed by, his environment. In "Millie" a young

wife befriends and sympathizes with a pursued youth when she is alone with him. Yet, when he has gone, she joins her husband and his friends in yelling for the boy's life; her chance of being an individual in her own right is destroyed by circumstantial limitations. Though these three stories skilfully combine internal synthesis of character with impersonal narration, they lack authentic dialogue.

Mansfield's flair for dialogue is shown in the satirical pieces of the Rhythm period. It is as though we were listening to voices from the next room, and while we cannot see the speakers, the conversation conveys much more about the characters than what is actually said, or, if they were real, what they would want us to know. These are clever sketches about witty and tiresome women, and are interesting only for their capacity to transmit realistic dialogue.

Lacking in these three distinct types of stories is a fusion of the author's best capabilities. In the childhood tales there is the warmth and scene, but not the sense of place which is a dominant part of the violence-stories. The latter lack a fine sense of dialogue which is present in the satirical sketches which themselves lack warmth and adequate character interest. It was now Mansfield's job to put the best of her abilities into a

creative entity.

Until 1916 her treatment was the same as in the stories discussed above. For a time she seems to have been in a creative vacuum where the stories were slow and even uneconomical in material. Each story is introduced with much background and detail, and the endings are usually long and involved. This type of ending she soon discarded, and often in her later work she cut short her story at a climax, leaving the reader to supply the ending. In "Something Childish But Very Natural", written in 1913, the story of two innocent young lovers who plan to spend a weekend together in a cottage, the reader is left wondering exactly what will happen:

The garden became full of shadows--they  
spun a web of darkness over the cottage  
and the trees and Henry and the telegram.  
But Henry did not move.

Though this strongly suggests that the girl will not come, the telegram's message is not revealed; the reader is left in the middle of a climax. It was a problem of subtlety which, once she had grasped, she was to develop quickly.

Upon the death of her brother in 1915, Katherine Mansfield began a conscious change in her work. As before, she needed an original impetus, something which affected her deeply, to induce greater achievement.

Now--now I want to write recollections of my own country. Yes, I want to write about my own country till I simply exhaust my store. Not only because it is 'a sacred debt' that I pay to my country because my brother and I were born there, but also because in my thoughts I range with him over all the remembered places. I am never far away from them. I long to renew them in writing.

Ah, the people--the people we loved there--of them, too, I want to write. Another 'debt of love'. Oh, I want for one moment to make our undiscovered country leap into the eyes of the Old World. It must be mysterious, as though floating. It must take the breath. It must be 'one of those islands...'....all of it must be told with a sense of mystery, a radiance, an afterglow, because you, my little sun of it, are set. You have dropped over the dazzling brim of the world. Now I<sub>1</sub> must play my part.

And so she began "The Aloe". After condensing a few episodes and removing some of them completely, altering the personality of the mother, and eliminating two characters, she changed the title to "Prelude" and finished it in 1917. The two versions are quite different from each other, and here I will deal with the finished product, "Prelude".<sup>2</sup> It is a simple story whose connecting thread is the picture of a New Zealand family moving from the city to the country. There is no proper plot; the aim of the writer is to show the actions and thoughts of a particular family. The main

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1. Journal of Katherine Mansfield, edited by J. Middleton Murry, London, 1929, p. 42. (January 22, 1916)
  2. Sylvia Berkman, in her Katherine Mansfield--A Critical Study, London, 1952, carefully analyses the differences.

idea is not even an interest in their adjustment to the move. It is a series of episodes focussing on a family and the individual parts of that family. When the reader has seen how they think and feel about themselves and others, and can picture them in their new surroundings, Mansfield leaves them there. What happens to them is not important. They are like the people whom we meet casually, with whom we talk for a few moments, and whom we remember occasionally when some person or some event recalls them to our minds. For there is something enchanting about "Prelude" which gives the people and the incidents the intangible quality of remembrance.

This enchantment rises from many qualities in the story, not only in the episodes themselves, but in the way they are told. It is the mature Katherine Mansfield, the writer who has finally fused and consolidated her capabilities. It is the effortless synthesis of character which perhaps has the greatest single appeal in this story. I say 'effortless' because it is remarkable how the focus naturally shifts from one character to another. Not only does this seem effortless in the medium of external synthesis when she is looking at the characters from the outside, but it seems equally unexacting as we are taken from the mind of one character to that of another. The shift

in interest is unpredictable, untroubled, and sure. But if we think that this liquid quality of focus, or the interlinking of episode, is casual, we are wrong. It is firstly related to description of a family on the move, and secondly, each new episode is related to a character who has a minor role in the previous incident. An example of this is the episode marked 4. Kezia goes to bed after the drinking of tea in part 3; as she says her prayers, she hears Aunt Beryl laughing. Then Aunt Beryl is presented, dreaming about a future, and thinking of Stanley and his unreasonableness. A picture of Stanley is drawn next as he thinks of his land, the work to be done on it, and the life he is going to lead. Part 4 ends with a drawing of Pat, the servant, who will be doing most of the work, and with the grandmother who goes back to Kezia with whom the section began. The circle has been completed and all the links, though not obvious, are there. Throughout the story we see Kezia and her sisters, Linda and the grandmother, Stanley and Linda, Aunt Beryl and the servants--all woven together as part of the family which is, in the last analysis, the main character of the piece. None of the individuals in this story can be said to be the main character; that place of dominance is reserved for the family of which Kezia and the others are only a part. The unity of the

story is intensified by an awareness of Mansfield's theme: that though people may live in the same house, they are, for the most part, separate from the complex whole; that despite similarities in heredity and environment, they think differently about identical things; and, that despite intense and close relationships, individuality belongs to everyone, and that one cannot know a person completely, but must respect the inner privacy of another human being.

Closely linked with this theme is the setting of the story. Mansfield wanted her reader to feel the living quality of the New Zealand environment. She described the people because we do not know their type; she could have called Stanley a 'typical New Zealander', but the majority of readers would not know what a typical New Zealander was like. She could not assume that her reader would be familiar with the New Zealand she knew. It was her purpose to establish a familiarity. She did this by using real names which she had found in her family history, and by describing actual houses and places. The authenticity present in the story is there because she had seen the place; for surely a place and an event can be better drawn if it comes directly from actual experience. This does not imply that she was at a loss in creative imagin-



ation, for Linda is real, though elusive, and yet she is quite unlike Mansfield's mother. Her original ideas, however, usually spring from something she has known intimately. Imagination worked hand in hand with verisimilitude. With this imagination her descriptions of the house and gardens bring a complete mental picture. Particularly in the description of dawn does the reader receive a definite sense of place:

Dawn came sharp and chill with red clouds on a faint green sky and drops of water on every leaf and blade. A breeze blew over the garden, dropping dew and dropping petals, shivered over the drenched paddocks, and was lost in the sombre bush. In the sky some tiny stars floated for a moment and then they were gone--they were dissolved like bubbles. And plain to be heard in the early quiet was the sound of the creek in the paddock running over the brown stones, running in and out of the sandy hollows, hiding under clumps of dark berry bushes, spilling into a swamp of yellow water flowers and cresses.

And then at the first beam of sun the birds began. Big cheeky birds, starlings and mynahs, whistled on the lawns, the little birds, the goldfinches and linnets and fan-tails, flicked from bough to bough. A lovely kingfisher perched on the paddock fence preening his rich beauty, and a 'tui' sang his three notes and laughed and sang them again.

The adjectives of colour warm and liven her improving prose style. For other examples there are: Beryl's eyes "greeny blue with little gold points"; the cook "was fiery red and the duck a Spanish mahogany"; and the "ducks preening their

dazzling breasts, and other ducks with the same dazzling breasts and yellow bills swam upside down with them".

With colourful descriptions she reveals things about her characters and the surroundings. Fresh, new, and apt descriptions are one of her strong assets. Stanley is seen "leaning against the side of the bed and giving himself a good scratch on his shoulders and back"; Kezia when "she heard Aunt Beryl's rush of laughter, and once she heard a loud trumpeting from Burnell blowing his nose" as she "rolled herself up into a round but did not go to sleep"; and perhaps Mansfield's best image in this story as Kezia looks through a piece of coloured glass to see "a little Chinese Lottie in the garden below".<sup>1</sup>

When she felt it was necessary she used description, but she did not become carried away by it. In the majority of the stories prior to 1917, the beginning is that of a long description of either person or place. By now, Mansfield was working more economically. She puts the reader into the middle of a scene, and lets the situation imply the things which have happened before:

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1. An incident direct from Mansfield's childhood. She had been fascinated by the stained glass in the front door of their home in Wellington, and often could be found watching people through it.

There was not an inch of room for Lottie and Kezia in the buggy. When Pat swung them on top of the luggage they wobbled; the grandmother's lap was full and Linda Burnell could not possibly have held a lump of a child on hers for any distance. Isabel, very superior, was perched beside the new handy-man on the driver's seat. Holdalls, bags and boxes were piled upon the floor. "These are absolute necessities that I will not let out of my sight for one instant," said Linda Burnell, her voice trembling with fatigue and excitement.

It is as though we had been walking down the street, had come around a corner, and were faced with the scene.

Just as there is economy of description, there is care in explication. She avoids over-explanation which once was a grave fault, and lets the reader interpret subsequent action. In the duck-killing scene, Kezia, crying, is picked up by Pat, the handy-man and culprit of the piece:

She put up her hands and touched his ears. She felt something. Slowly she raised her quivering face and looked. Pat wore little round ear-rings. She never knew that men wore ear-rings. She was very much surprised. "Do they come on and off?" she asked huskily.

It does not have to be stated that Kezia has stopped crying, that she has quite forgotten the duck, or that children are easily upset and as easily forget.

It has been noted that she removed all superfluous information and unnecessary comments from certain incidents;

she did likewise with her dialogue. The gift for characterizing speech which she displayed in the Epilogues 1-111 of 1913 is strengthened in "Prelude". She seems to have been striving for succinctness in all aspects of technique. This was a wise plan for the conversation is still flexible, but more dramatic. Though the characters live in rather a hum-drum world, they are not tiresome women such as those in the Epilogues. She has made these characters live because of their fresh, but ordinary, conversation, and has not filled the dialogue with witty remarks on life. This smart conversation of the majority of the stories before "Prelude" was clever but false; now, with simplicity, she had inserted into her story a note of sincerity. The influence of Wilde had gone; in its place the genuine Katherine Mansfield emerged, no longer feeling the necessity to shock the world or to impress those about her. Indifferent detachment is the role played by Linda in "Prelude" and this is shown by her dialogue. She says little, but what she says is neither ordinary nor vivacious; it is rather almost supernatural, as though she had a sixth sense which is the mark of the elusiveness which puts her into a separate world. As we see Linda's thoughts, this interpretation of her personality is strengthened. It is also there when Kezia asks her about the plant dominating

the garden:

"That is an aloe, Kezia," said her mother.  
 "Does it ever have any flowers?"  
 "Yes, Kezia," and Linda smiled down at her,  
 and half shut her eyes. "Once every hundred  
 years."

This makes the reader wonder when the aloe will come into the story again, and if there is a unifying symbol in this scene. It is questioning and mysterious, but except for a casual mention of the aloe in passing, it is not referred to again.<sup>1</sup> As with Linda, there is an individual stamp on each character. This is unobtrusively distinctive not only of their talk, but of the thoughts which lie behind their words. Where Linda sees things around her in a misty light, the grandmother is full of practical assurance about the things around her. When Linda asks her what she is thinking about, she says:

"I haven't really been thinking of anything. I wondered as we passed the orchard what the fruit trees were like and whether we should be able to make much jam this autumn. There are splendid healthy currant bushes in the vegetable garden. I noticed them today. I should like to see those pantry shelves thoroughly well stocked with our own jam..."

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1. In "The Aloe", Mansfield was to use the plant as a main symbol, having it cut down on Stanley's orders while Linda was away, not aware that Linda loved the plant. Its removal would intensify the lack of communication between husband and wife.

This way of revealing character is done with Beryl who varies in mood, yet over-expresses herself with superlatives, and with Stanley who remains direct, somewhat irritating, and occasionally receives our sympathy.

One of the main attractions of the story is the excellent dialogue of the children. Baby-talk is used sparingly, for Mansfield needs no special spelling or syllable-stress to give the picture of the children speaking. They seem to talk of their own accord once they are put into action. This is particularly delightful when the children are discovered playing 'house':

"Good morning, Mrs. Jones."

"Oh, good morning, Mrs. Smith. I'm so glad to see you. Have you brought your children?"

"Yes, I've brought both my twins. I have had another baby since I saw you last, but she came so suddenly that I haven't had time to make her any clothes yet. So I left her...How is your husband?"

"Oh, he is very well, thank you. At least he had an awful cold but Queen Victoria--she's my godmother, you know--sent him a case of pineapples and that cured it immediately. Is that your new servant?"

"Yes, her name's Gwen. I've only had her two days. Oh, Gwen, this is my friend, Mrs. Smith."

"Good morning, Mrs. Smith. Dinner won't be ready for about ten minutes."

"I don't think you ought to introduce me to the servant. I think I ought to just begin talking to her."

"Well, she's more of a lady-help than a servant and you do introduce lady-helps, I know, because Mrs. Samuel Josephs had one."



"Prelude" marks the beginning of Mansfield's mature work. Her technique, now, is based on economy and sustained mood. Pursuing suggestion for its effect and for restraint, she saw subtle meanings in her characters. With the death of her brother, she had undergone an emotional catharsis and had emerged very critical of her work; with Murry's love she had gained emotional security and a deeper awareness of her past and the things around her; and with happier circumstances this sensibility was merged with her work.

Bliss and Other Stories was published in December, 1920. It contained besides "Prelude",<sup>1</sup> the best work she had done up to that time: "Je ne parle pas francais" and "The Man Without a Temperament" written in 1919; "Pictures" and "Mr. Reginald Peacock's Day", and a few others from 1917; "Revelations" and "The Escape", recently written; and others, originally written from 1915-17 and rewritten in the light of her maturing style. The attention of the critics was attracted to this new volume of short stories, which they praised highly as a good reflection of contemporary society. Desmond MacCarthy was particularly interested in her technique of internal synthesis to show character and likened her method to the recording of

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1. "Prelude" was published in June, 1918, by Virginia Woolf's Hogarth Press.



daydreams.<sup>1</sup> He thought that the Mansfield stories showed amazing facility in getting inside character by this technique and related this prowess to her self-conceit. Can one say, because Mansfield thought so much about herself, that this part of her personality gave her a capacity to write about the thoughts of people which other writers, not as concerned with self as she was, were unable to do? Is internal synthesis something which can only be accomplished by a person full of self-conceit? These are not questions which can be answered categorically. Anyone who thinks about any emotion whether or not it is concerned with self has the potentialities for writing about that emotion. It is what we think and how closely we can identify ourselves with the thoughts and actions of others that strengthens or lessens our ability to express ourselves in a manner which will appear valuable and striking to others. This relationship is what makes a story appeal to a reader, for naturally one prefers a story where one can identify oneself with one or two of the main characters. Whether or not Mansfield's technique of character exposition arose from her self-conceit is a question which is unanswerable. But one can strongly suggest that it was an awareness of people

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1. Desmond MacCarthy, a review of Bliss and Other Stories, The New Statesman, January 15, 1921.

and their problems--things with which she could identify her own life--that gave her this perceptive quality to analyse character.<sup>1</sup> And so her character studies made her second volume of short stories brilliant to her contemporaries.

A few of the stories of this volume should be examined with greater detail. The ones chosen are: the title story itself, "Bliss", "Je ne parle pas francais", "Pictures" and "The Man Without A Temperament".

As far as the plot is concerned, "Bliss" is the story of a woman who is, for the first time, ready to give herself completely to her husband, and who inadvertently discovers while entertaining that he is having an affair with one of her friends. The story is especially significant for the way in which Mansfield has captured the joy of the wife at the beginning of the story:

Although Bertha Young was thirty she still had moments like this when she wanted to run instead of walk, to take dancing steps on and off the pavement, to bowl a hoop, to throw something up in the air and catch it again, or to stand still and laugh at-- nothing--at nothing, simply.

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1. This time all the stories are written in the third-person. Seven of them can be directly related to Mansfield's life. In the other seven, however, the narrator is the same. Mansfield never created another narrator to tell her stories as did Kipling and Conrad.

What can you do if you are thirty and, turning the corner of your own street, you are overcome, suddenly, by a feeling of bliss--absolute bliss!--as though you'd suddenly swallowed a bright piece of that late afternoon sun and it burned in your bosom, sending out a little shower of sparks into every particle, into every finger and toe?...

Oh, is there no way you can express it without being "drunk and disorderly"? How idiotic civilization is!....

But in her bosom there was still that bright glowing place--that shower of little sparks coming from it. It was almost unbearable. She hardly dared to breathe for fear of fanning it higher, and yet she breathed deeply, deeply. She hardly dared to look into the cold mirror--but she did look, and it gave her back a woman, radiant, with smiling, trembling lips, with big dark eyes and an air of listening, waiting for something...divine to happen...that she knew must happen...infallibly.

The story moves from descriptions of emotions to those of physical things. In a description of the garden, she mentions the pear tree "becalmed against the jade-green sky" and the tulips "seemed to lean upon the dusk". The fresh image is carried to a description of Mrs. Norman Knight who "did look like a very intelligent monkey--who had even made that yellow dress out of scraped banana skins. And her amber ear-rings: they were like little dangling nuts." From the descriptions and thoughts examined it is seen that Katherine Mansfield is more interested in the personalities of her characters than in the plot; the purpose of this story is not to show the unfaithfulness of the husband, but to show the happiness of Bertha and the effect of sudden shock to her "bliss".

By satire she ridicules the artificial Norman Knights in "Bliss", and she uses the same method to expose Raoul Duquette, the charlatan artist of pseudo-bohemia in "Je ne parle pas francais". There is grim judgement here, mingled with a clever humour and a malicious wit. Mouse, the main feminine character, is deserted by Dick, Duquette's friend, in Paris. Again it is not the plot which is the focus of the story, but the personality of Raoul Duquette. He reveals his own depraved character, and much more is unveiled than he would like. Two views are given: what actually happened, and what Duquette sees through his own perverted eyes. Introduced through Duquette's mind is a complete world of imagery which comes again from three time-levels: the past, present, and future. His sordid childhood is seen, when he remembers being seduced by an African laundress; his present reflections on things (one of them being "blotting-paper which was soft and limp and almost moist, like the tongue of a little dead kitten, which I've never felt"); and his future dreams of "never going near that place again" when he thinks of the future of the deserted Mouse. Duquette emerges as a figure of conceit and evil which receives some sympathy. He is left to continue publishing his work with such revealing titles as False Coins, Wrong Doors, and Left Umbrellas--

all sounding vague and inherently negative.

Another artist is drawn in "Pictures", but Miss Ada Moss's monologues reveal a respectable and sincere woman who is driven by poverty to prostitution. Miss Moss is not resigned to old age and loneliness, for she deludes herself with evasions about her talent as a singer. Even when she is seen as a prostitute by a man she meets in a restaurant, she deceives herself into thinking that it is worth while. She is not a woman who can do anything else. It seems to be her misplaced fate to live bewildered as to her passive resentment at her life; she is not even truly aware of her own downfall. The "stout gentleman" compliments her on her clothes and she only betrays herself by going with him:

"That's a tempting bit o'ribbon!" said he. Miss Moss blushed until a pulse at the top of her head that she never had felt before pounded away.

"I always was one for pink," said she.

The stout gentleman considered her, drumming with her fingers on the table.

"I like 'em firm and well covered," said he.

Miss Moss, to her surprise, gave a loud snigger.

Five minutes later the stout gentleman heaved himself up. "Well, am I goin' your way, or are you comin' mine?" he asked.

"I'll come with you, if it's all the same," said Miss Moss. And she sailed after the little yacht out of the café.

The main technique used here is the monologue of Miss Moss's

thoughts, carefully fused with dialogue, frequent scene changes, and many minor characters. The narrative, despite these changes and characters, flows easily and quickly, presenting a story which links external detail with underlying emotional reactions.

"The Man Without A Temperament" is a carefully wrought story showing that a man's feelings cannot be judged by his outward actions. Other guests in the hotel where Mr. and Mrs. Salesby are staying misconstrue his conduct as the behaviour of a man who has no feeling for his sick wife. By a series of flashbacks, it is seen that he does love his wife and despises only her illness. These flashbacks are carefully woven into the story and are marked only by a space on the printed page. The first flashback is brought about by a letter which the wife has received:

"Snow, Robert! Think of it!" And she touched the little dark violets pinned on her thin bosom and went back to the letter.

...Snow. Snow in London. Millie with the early morning cup of tea....He raises himself in the bed; he catches a glimpse of the solid houses opposite framed in white, of their window-boxes full of great sprays of white coral....Snow--heavy snow over everything.

He is a 'man with a temperament' as he thinks of home. As he lights his pipe in the south, he thinks of another



occasion when he did the same things at home, and the second flashback begins. The final one shows his reflections about the doctor's diagnosis of his wife's illness. Despite his longing for home, the husband does stay with his wife. Not only do we see his 'temperament' by viewing his thoughts, but we witness his actions in the room as he gets out of bed to kill a mosquito which has bothered his wife. These are things which the other guests in the hotel cannot see. There is Robert Salesby, a man who is misunderstood by people who are more shallow than they imagine him to be. The personalities of the other guests are disclosed by their reflections on Robert. The wife is shown by Robert's thoughts about her. But Robert is the focus of the story; everything is connected with his meditations and he continues to be tender and misunderstood. But Mr. Salesby is not perfect--none of Mansfield's characters are--for, by his thoughts, we learn of his self-absorption and martyr-like resignation.

With Bliss and Other Stories Katherine Mansfield displayed her mastery of the form she had chosen for her individual expression. By internal synthesis, she examined her characters, exposing their thoughts and dreams. Whether or not the life she depicted was real is another



question which cannot be answered. But it was real to her, and she saw a world where people seemed to be out of contact with one another. This idea was based upon her own life, and she felt that other people lived the same way. The stories appeal to the emotions, and, therefore, do not appeal to everyone. Human life was precious to her, and the reader who has this value of life can appreciate Mansfield's work. There is disillusionment, the destruction of happiness and faith, yet the stories are permeated with the strength of the human values of virtue and integrity. She drew a deeply personal and subjective picture of life, but she left the moral judgement of her characters to the reader. That was her constant ambition.

The Garden Party, a collection of stories published in February, 1922, is a happier book than Bliss and Other Stories. Where she seemed concerned with the serious things in life in the latter, the former is based on pity as a part of her indignation. It is, however, wonderful to be alive in this world. By now she knew that she was gravely ill, and as before, the stories reflect her immediate position. Life was wonderful, but death was an end to beauty; and the greatest sorrow in life was the mental distress caused by the nemesis of

death shadowing the minds of the living. Her new volume of short stories was an echo of her feelings. Within a year she was to be dead; life and all it stood for were the ideas which concerned her while she endured her fatal illness. At times this is a cynical and cruel book, but it is a view of life seen by a clever woman who has lost her feelings of sentimentality. This quality has been seen in her earlier stories. In this volume, however, sentimentality is gone, its place taken by an acute awareness of life and death. The same qualities as those in Bliss and Other Stories were seen by the critics; the only objection was the 'disagreeable' subjects of the stories. Although death may be the focus of them, it is a death seen through the eyes of the living.

The fifteen stories in The Garden Party are the culmination of Mansfield's work as a short story writer.<sup>1</sup> These reflect certain trends in her growth as a writer, and four will be discussed here: "At The Bay" as another story of the New Zealand family; "The Garden Party" and "The Stranger" for their ideas on life and death; and "The Daughters of the Late Colonel" as a picture of pity.

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1. Nine of the fifteen stories here are associated with Mansfield's own life; her presence as narrator is felt in all fifteen stories of this volume. Again, the stories are told in the third-person.

"At The Bay" is the last study of the New Zealand family of "Prelude" fame, while they are on a vacation at the seashore. Again the family is the main protagonist, with the individual as a part of the whole. The story's object is to show how this family behave and think within the limitation of a single day. They are not involved in any traumatic episode, but are shown merely spending a quiet day, with Stanley off to work, Linda dreaming as she cares for her baby son, the grandmother managing the house, and the children playing on the beach. The story begins with the dawn and ends with the evening; their next day will be similar. The feeling of a seaside existence is given in the many casual intimate descriptions of the sea, which almost evokes character in its own right:

The sun was rising. It was marvellous how quickly the most thinned, sped away, dissolved from the shallow plain, rolled up from the bush and was gone as if in a hurry to escape; big twists and curls jostled and shouldered each other as the silvery beams broadened. The far-away sky--a bright, pure blue--was reflected in the puddles, and the drops, swimming along the telegraph poles, flashed into points of light. Now the leaping, glittering sea was so bright it made one's eyes ache to look at it.

The wave-like rhythm of the phrases suits the subject of the sea. As in "Prelude", the incidents are numbered and related to one another by a minor character of one episode

becoming the dominant character of the next. The theme of life and death is here: Linda reflects on her own growth and death; the servant, Alice, discusses the dead husband of her afternoon hostess, Mrs. Stubbs; and there is the conversation of Kezia and her grandmother as the latter thinks of her dead son:

"Why did Uncle William have to die? He wasn't old."  
 Mrs. Fairfield began counting the stitches in threes.  
 "It hush happened," she said in an absorbed voice.  
 "Does everyone have to die?" asked Kezia.  
 "Everybody!"  
 "Me?" Kezia sounded fearfully incredulous.  
 "Some day, my darling."  
 "But, grandma." Kezia waved her left leg and waggled the toes. They felt sandy.  
 "What if I just won't?"  
 The old woman sighed again and drew a long thread from the ball.  
 "We're not asked, Kezia," she said sadly.  
 "It happens to all of us sooner or later."

The conversation is soon forgotten, but the note of pitying melancholy has been played. The story finishes on a haunting note; the reader is left to meditate on the family that has retired that night, and somehow it is felt that Mansfield has written all that she was to write about them. It has an aminorous tone:

A cloud, small, serene, floated across the moon. In that moment of darkness the sea sounded deep, troubled. Then the cloud sailed away, and the sound of the sea was a vague murmur, as though it waked out of a dark dream. All was still.

"The Garden Party" also leaves a haunting spell. It is a story of contrasts. There is the gaiety of the wealthy family entertaining with their garden party, contrasted with the sadness of the poor family mourning the sudden death of the father. The joy of Laura is juxtaposed with the shock she receives when she views the sorrow of death. The knowledge that life is full of coexisting incongruities makes her character develop in one episode. It is a gradual change, for when she hears of the accidental death in the neighbourhood, she feels that the party should be cancelled. Her family disapprove of this and the party goes on as scheduled. But when she takes a basket of food to the bereaved family, Laura witnesses too soon death in life. She cannot explain her feelings as she talks to her brother. When he asks her whether her visit was 'awful', she says:

"No," sobbed Laura. "It was simply marvellous. But, Laurie--" She stopped, she looked at her brother. "Isn't life," she stammered, "isn't life--" But what life was she couldn't explain. No matter. He quite understood.

"Isn't it, darling?" said Laurie.

It is death seen by the living, knowing that life must go on though death has been seen. But Laura's personality has undergone a change; death has left its mark.

This theme also is seen in "The Stranger", one of Mansfield's best stories. Here a death permanently changes the relationship of a married couple. Tension is established from the beginning as the husband waits for his wife to come ashore from a ship in the harbour. Quickly it is learned that the husband has an impetuous, energetic nature, as contrasted with the wife's distant quality; they are temperamentally miles apart. He wants her to himself, wants her to forget the children and to submit to his wishes for a few quiet days before going home. When he learns that a young man died in her arms on the ship, he thinks that his wife will always be a stranger to him just as the dead man is a stranger to him. When the wife expresses hope that this will not upset him, he thinks:

Spoilt their evening! Spoilt their being  
alone together! They would never be alone  
together again.

Perhaps his imagination has carried him away, and this idea is just another example of his wish to know all about his wife. There is no moral point here; there is only the concern for the condition of human loneliness and the idea that one can never become completely knowledgeable of another person.

The life of the sisters in "The Daughters of the Late Colonel" is also changed because of the death of their father. Though he was a tyrant to them, they seem unable to adjust to life after his death. Where they had thought of his death as a happy release for them, they find that it is not as wonderful as they had thought. The death has occurred when the story begins and the reader is quickly brought into the immediate problem of dividing the father's effects:

The week after was one of the busiest weeks of their lives. Even when they went to bed it was only their bodies that lay down and rested; their minds went on, thinking things out, talking things over, wondering, deciding, trying to remember where...

The daughters face the ordeal of grief knowing that it will be difficult, but the severe test is their slow and bitter resignation that their life is now empty. The situation evokes our sympathy; their present life, their immediate and distant past is revealed. For a moment, when the sun is out, it is felt that their lives will be more abundant in the future. But a cloud passes over the brilliant sun, and Constantia turns from her prized Buddha-- and life--?--"with one of her vague gestures". The story ends with the suggestion that the future for the two sisters will be one based on dreams; it will be a death-in-life existence.



Katherine Mansfield died in January, 1923, at the age of thirty-five, when she believed that she was on the path to better creative work. It is unprofitable to conjecture what she might have done had she lived; we are fortunate to have the short stories she did write. She is a part of her stories, and though she tried to remain outside her characters, her personality is always there. Often, in fact, her voice is confused with that of a character in her story.<sup>1</sup> Frequently there are chatty asides and descriptions which are the remarks of Mansfield herself. This is not entirely a fault, for the gossip tone fits the subject matter. This tone, rather, exposes the character from the outside; it is another way of revealing personality when descriptions of people can be associated to the mood implied by their own thoughts and dialogue. She also associates setting with the emotional mood of her stories, as was seen in "At The Bay". Her best stories show a linking of description, setting, dialogue and outside remarks, into one organic whole, creating a sustained mood.

She does not, however, have either variety or

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1. H. E. Bates feels that this makes Mansfield's stories monotonous, that the reader is very much in the danger of 'becoming bored'. If boredom does arise, it is probably more the fault of the reader than of Mansfield.

extensive range in her characters. Though they may come from many social classes, their emotional make-up is similar. They are people who never accept the problems of life, and experience only momentary joy. Life for them is a well of emotion ranging from the zeniths of happiness to the nadirs of despair; and each sensation is only a fleeting one. Her capacity for creating children has been lavishly praised. It must be remembered that these children were modelled on memories of her own childhood, and that the adults are drawn with equal strength. At times her children are too precocious to be real--as are most children in fiction--but there is always authenticity in her adult creations.

Fresh imaginative associations of the children in the New Zealand family stories have been viewed, and this interest in the child-world is reflected in many of Mansfield's descriptions. She concentrated on imagery related to the miniature. The woman in "Psychology" dreams of a friendship as "so dear and so minute it might have been painted on the blue teapot lid". Rosemary Fell, in "A Cup of Tea", wishes to buy a little enamel box where "on the lid a minute creature stood under a flowery tree, and a more minute creature still had her arms round his neck. Her hat, really no bigger

than a geranium petal, hung from a branch". As can be seen, with a concern for the minute come bright colour words. Energetic verbs, too, give buoyancy to her work; 'twinkle', 'flash', 'dart', 'gleam', 'glitter', 'sparkle', and similar action verbs pervade her prose. Frequently, too, there is a recurring symbol which echoes the theme of the story. When there is happiness there is light, and with sadness, shadow. In "The Man Without A Temperament" Salesby often turns his signet ring around on his finger--a symbol of his encircling bondage or boredom, and homesickness, which Mansfield never states.

Not as a writer of magnitude will Katherine Mansfield be remembered. Her plots are simple, never contrived, and are not memorable. Internal synthesis of character, however, does bring to her work a vitality seldom equalled in the short story. The New Zealand family, Bertha Young, and Robert Salesby, are people whom one does not forget. They are never dull, and repeated readings of the stories concerned with them only strengthen their appeal. It is with the contribution of character analysis that Katherine Mansfield left her mark on the growth of the English short story. Here were the beginnings of economy and psychology in character studies in the short story which were to lapse eventually into the realization of the genre now known as the 'New Yorker story'.

Chapter Four: D. H. Lawrence

Aldous Huxley

D. H. Lawrence

D. H. Lawrence spent his life trying to find a spiritual and physical home outside the society in which he was born and which he had rejected. It was his misfortune that he expended his energies in a frantic search for this spiritual home rather than creating within himself a compatibility with the world. He seemed unable to accept things or to change them, and consequently he spent his life moving around the earth in search for something ready-made into which he could move, and thus be at peace with himself and with society. Because of this search, there is a strange impulse toward autobiography in Lawrence's work which often carried him to the verge of incoherence. Lawrence, the rebel, was unable to write a completely successful novel because there was nothing stable in his life to write about. He could only proclaim his ego in defiance of his mining-community background which he hated, or of the world which had frowned upon his elopement with a married woman. There was something in Lawrence's personality which prevented complete expression, and his novels are more a study of the nature of man--his kind of man--than of art. Lawrence's entire struggle in his novels is an attempt to

remedy the emotional deficiencies which he felt within himself.<sup>1</sup> Although our interests are aroused, the moments which compel our sympathy are few. With all Lawrence's great faculty of characterization, he could not achieve the essential of the reader's identification with the people in the novels. They are seen clearly, but hardly felt at all. The reader is merely an outsider watching a variety of people living in a social milieu which should be, but is not, his own. Hence, Lawrence's novels, as wholes, are artistic failures because they are not a medium in which the ego is sublimated into an imagination less involved in the immediate circumstances of his own life. Lawrence is an important writer; he has more vitality, originality, and gusto than any of his contemporary novelists, even though they may be real novelists and he is not. But he tried to be too many things in his novels: philosopher, poet, journalist-observer, satirist, and storyteller. All these cannot make a successful novel; a novel, no matter how complex, should be integrated and homogeneous, and unmistakably not many things but one. There are many incidents in a Lawrence novel which stand

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1. "His novels are intended as moralities showing the consequences of living with or without the light of his own beliefs." Anthony West, D. H. Lawrence, London, 1950, p. 73.

out as fine episodes, clear and consistent. This consistency in episode creation is the reason why, as most critics agree, the short stories of D. H. Lawrence are much better than his novels. Because the very nature of a short story demands an interplay of characters on a specific level, the writer's personal sensibilities do not often intrude. And when Lawrence's personality is not directly concerned--it is always there, but hovering and not blatant--his short stories are of the highest calibre.

This does not mean that Lawrence wrote best when he was writing about things outside his personal experience. On the contrary, some of his best stories have as their mainspring an experience in Lawrence's own life, but they are good stories only when he tells the episode and synthesizes the characters in a straight-forward fashion, and does not insert his own personal philosophy on the action. Fortunately, the very scope of the short story did not permit much outright personal philosophy. What philosophy there is is woven into the plot and not dogmatically thrust forward by the Lawrencean-prophet. It is, for the most part, the reader's responsibility to assimilate the Lawrence attitude towards life.

This is why the plot of a Lawrence short story is



more important than the plot of a story by Katherine Mansfield, for instance. Lawrence was as much interested in what happened to people as he was in the people themselves. Once he had the plot of a story in mind, he would think about it for some time, toying with various aspects of it. After he could relate it to his own philosophy and could see the story as a whole, he would sit down and write it. What happened in the story was very important to him, and it was far more important than the people involved. It was the incident itself that mattered, and the complete integration of all parts of that incident into the scheme of living in the outside world. Anthony West says:

Perhaps the greatest merit of Lawrence's writing is that it is integrated. His own overmastering sense of unity prevents him from dealing with the scene, the people, the animals, the things, thoughts, and action in separate departments. There is never a divorce between the setting and the people, the action does not take place against a backdrop; the people are part of the scene, and the action is the scene's vitality.<sup>1</sup>

How the people reacted to the action of life's problems was definitely secondary to the problem itself. It is

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1. Anthony West, "The Short Stories", in The Achievement of D. H. Lawrence, edited and with an introduction by F. J. Hoffman and H. T. Moore, Norman, Oklahoma, 1953, p. 207.

this focus on plot for its own sake which links Lawrence to the writers of sketches in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But where these writers were partial to plot because it told a 'good story', Lawrence was interested because of its relationship to life. He went one step farther; his stories are interesting not only because they tell a tale, but because the tale has universal qualities. The core of the situation can readily be applied to concrete truths.

One theme which is predominant in Lawrence's short stories concerns the breaking into a confined, established world by an intruder. In "The Ladybird", written in 1920, it is a Polish aristocrat who causes a revision in the marital relationship between the daughter of a peer and her husband. The wife is finally seduced by the Count, after he has fascinated her by discussing mystical delights and the value of darkness in their relationship. Their affair is consummated at night while the husband is in the house. The Count leaves and the wife is expecting his child. We do not learn whether she tells her husband or not, but we do know that the affair has ended for her with the Count's departure. In this unsuccessful story, however, the plot can be categorized as gossip. It may not be malicious, but irres-

possible gossip it is. In "Shades of Spring", written in 1918, an educated ex-lover returns to his girl-friend and her new fiancé. He finds her happy in a deep physical love with her game-keeper, and is rejected in his appeal for a platonic friendship. He leaves knowing that he cannot establish the relationship he craves, and the girl realizes that something will always be missing in her life with the game-keeper. In both stories there is a universal question. No matter how secure a relationship may be, one never knows when and how an outsider may disturb it. Though the third person may leave, he is not forgotten, and his effect is left on the situation. In the majority of Lawrence's stories, the established union is usually strengthened, and the 'ivory-tower' relationship is secured even more.<sup>1</sup> However, in "The Fox", written in 1922, the intruder inadvertently destroys the relationship between two girls, and he plans to marry the less self-willed one. Lawrence explains that no relationship is completely secure and, therefore, can be changed quickly and unexpectedly. In a small way, and really quite ineffectively, he was attacking complacency in married couples, for often Lawrence's theme is associated with the particular axe he

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1. Essentially, Lawrence sees human relationships in terms of a conflict out of which a synthesis is possible, but not inevitable.

is grinding at the moment.

The universal quality in love and the marriage relationship is another theme frequently shown in Lawrence's work. In "The Blind Man", "Blue Moccasins", "The Overtone", and in other stories, a definite message from Lawrence to the reader is given. He sees the physical act of sexual intercourse as a fulfilment of love. As Harry Moore writes:

He had written boldly of sexual matters because he felt that too much repression and intellectualization were destroying the instinctual part of man's nature: Lawrence stressed passion exclusively and because he believed it should be brought into balance with intellect.<sup>1</sup> This is the central message of Lawrence.

A spiritual love is not complete, nor is one which is only physical. A love relationship, to Lawrence, must begin spiritually, and the physical side is a culmination of perfection of the existing spiritual love. In Lawrence's scheme there are no sordid associations with physical love in opposition to the spiritual. From one develops the other, and both make a lasting union. To be remembered in human relationships is the fact that there is always a part of an individual's personality which cannot be known

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1. Harry T. Moore, The Life and Work of D. H. Lawrence, New York, 1951, p. 17.

by another.<sup>1</sup> Respect for this individuality strengthens any relationship. These are human truths which are brought to mind and reinforced by Lawrence's stories. Thus, in "The Blind Man", the husband, blinded in the war, has a wife whom he does not know completely just as she does not know him or his feelings because he is blind. Nevertheless, their life is a happy one, and their relationship is strengthened by the visit of one of the wife's childhood sweethearts. The visitor cannot understand the relationship between his beautiful friend and her blind husband, and retreats when the husband wishes to know him better. Perhaps the husband knows too well that his friendship would mean departure for the guest who shies away from bold and new contacts. The guest goes away, but leaves a renewed and stronger association behind him. "Blue Moccasins" has a greater range because it traces the relationship between a young man and an older woman over a number of years. They marry despite the fact that the woman is twenty years older than the man. He goes away to the war and returns to find a woman much older than he thought she would be. Eventually

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1. This is best stated in The Plumed Serpent: "Men and women should know that they cannot, absolutely, meet on earth. In the closest kiss, the dearest touch, there is the small gulf, which is none the less complete because it is so narrow, so nearly non-existent."

the husband goes to a younger woman, and the entire village is witness to a domestic quarrel. Unthinkingly, the husband has loaned a pair of blue moccasins to his girl-friend to use in a play they are both in. The wife interrupts the play to ask for the moccasins because they hold great value for her--she had worn them on her wedding night, and they are a symbol of her departed happiness. Our sympathy, if any, is with the wife; but the pattern of the couple's harmony is broken too completely for happiness to return to them.

When Lawrence attempted realism in his short stories, he dealt mainly with the physical relationships between men and women. Unfortunately, he could not leave them simple and uncomplicated, but had to permeate them with his own philosophy of physical love as the prime factor in life. This may be very true, but often Lawrence was trying as much to convince himself as he was to convince his readers. The theme of physical union is present in these stories far too much. Because this was a conscious question with Lawrence all his life, it gives his stories about it an almost unhealthy and obsessed atmosphere.

However, when he attempted a story without this detail, and instead dealt with a story whose chief concern

was a legendary or mystical plot, he was quite successful. An example of a legendary story is "The Rocking Horse Winner", written in 1923. It is the story of a little boy in a family which is always searching for more money to spend in order to keep up their social front of uncounted wealth. The boy wonders why they do not have enough money and his mother says it is because they do not have any luck; the boy thinks he is lucky and magically receives the names of winning horses by riding a toy horse. With the help of the gardener and his uncle, the boy increases the family's wealth without them knowing where the money comes from. The speed of receiving the names decreases, however, and after a long, wild ride he gives the name of the Derby winner and then collapses into a brain fever which brings death. Lawrence has exposed the money madness which destroys the bonds of many families. Like a legendary tale, the story has a moral. Lawrence tells his readers in fact not to ride a rocking-horse to find a winner, for the family is furiously riding its rocking horse but getting nowhere. The story illustrates this point in the boy's death. The family are not poor; they have a fine house, servants and a gardener,

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1. Like a fable of Aesop, the story has two parts: the narrative to point the moral, and the statement of that moral at the end.



and each parent has an independent income. 'Be content with what you have' is the fable-counterpart of this story. The legendary qualities do not end with the story's moral; the opening paragraph is reminiscent of "The king's daughter was very beautiful, but she was proud". Facts are given which are to be illustrated in the story to come:

There was a woman who was beautiful, yet she had no luck. She married for love and the love turned to dust.

The very house seems to speak and whispers repeatedly the phrase: "there must be more money". Paul, the boy, is given supernatural powers to find the race winners. All these qualities strengthen the tone and atmosphere established to bring a modern moral legend to the reader.

The supernatural is only a small part of the plot in "The Rocking Horse Winner", but some of Lawrence's stories deal essentially with the mystical. In "The Border Line", written in 1922, and one of Lawrence's best stories, it is the basis of the story. Katherine has been married to two Englishmen, the first one having been killed in action in Germany during the war. As she returns to the continent, she begins to believe that her first husband, Alan, is not really dead. As she wanders around at night,

she sees a man whom she knows is her first husband. She sees him again after her second husband, Philip, joins her. Philip becomes ill from the cold, and Katherine tends to him, but while away from the sick bed on a walk, she meets Alan who makes love to her among the rocks and bushes. As Philip is dying, Alan returns, and:

Philip unfurled his lips and showed his big teeth in a ghastly grin of death. Katherine felt his body convulse in strange throes under her hands, then go inert. He was dead. And on his face was a sickly grin of a thief caught in the very act.

But Alan drew her away, drew her to the other bed, in the silent passion of a husband come back from a very long journey.

It is not surprising that this, like Lawrence's other stories dealing with the supernatural, is concerned with the sexual. Here a woman lets her living husband die for the love of the ghost of her first husband. This strangeness of plot was eventually faced as supernatural in the story, "Glad Ghosts", where the curse of a family is lifted when the female ghost is sexually satisfied. These stories concerning sex and the supernatural are interesting for the way Lawrence has combined the two subjects. It is unfortunate that the two subjects are not actually very compatible.

Closely connected with Lawrence's plots are his

characters. In fact, the two cannot be separated. His plots are concerned with a main idea, just as his characters are more ideas than real people. This is the clue to the difference between Lawrence's technique and that of his contemporaries. He did not draw people as one-sided beings, nor did he create character-types. His characters do not develop consciously because of some change in their lives, nor are many facets of their personality seen. While his most active contemporaries were experimenting with 'stream-of-consciousness' writing and were trying to analyse all parts of a character, Lawrence was not interested in personality as much as he was in the idea behind that personality. He tried to find out the thinking behind his character's actions, and from this attempt came different ideas of human behaviour. Lawrence's characters represent not a group of people with one idea--and therefore, cannot be called character-types--but rather indicate a specific individualistic reaction to certain problems in society. He wrote about life as he had lived and observed it.

People fascinated Lawrence. Every new person he met was a positive challenge to him. What is this person afraid of--what has made life stop for another? Once he had found the question that seemed to him to be the clue

to each person he met or created, Lawrence never rested until he had traced down the answer. All things human he took for his province. Everything about a person went to help Lawrence to get inside a character--his clothes, his restless actions, and his friends. Lawrence's method in presenting these characters was to present them as a symbol of the idea he had managed to see in them.<sup>1</sup> This method of characterization, however, is subject to certain special qualifications. Obviously, this would not serve as a routine process for the treatment of character, or least not in the scale of a novel. The reader of a novel demands something more realistic; he demands an interplay of characters on a specific level; and he insists upon a character with many sides, strengths and weaknesses. The reader of a short story, however, expects only one or two sides of a character to be shown in the story. That is why Lawrence's method of characterization is more applicable to the short story form. His characters can be symbols of an idea and show only this side of their personality, because this very

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1. "What interests him in his characters is not the social man, the differentiated individual, but the seven-eighths of the iceberg of personality that is submerged and never seen, the unconscious mind, to which he preaches something like passivity on the part of the conscious." Walter Allen, "D. H. Lawrence in Perspective", Penguin New Writing, Autumn, 1946, p. 112.

fact increases the story's strength.

In "The Fox", the intruder who breaks up the home of the two girl farmers is a character who will always be remembered. He is the emotional focus of the story, overwhelming as a powerful symbol of vitality and intrusion. From the moment he appears, it is seen that he will not leave the farm as it was when he came. His influence is too great; his personality, having once visited a place, could not leave it unchanged. To complete the symbol of the young man as an idea of domination and intrusion, Lawrence uses another symbol as a foreshadow of his coming. He is identified with the fox that has been killing the chickens of the farm and which the girl could not kill once she had found him. Just as she cannot be rid of the fox when she has the opportunity, she has to submit in time to the domination of the man even though she at first holds herself from him. Throughout the story the young man is a heroic example of complete authority in a new situation, and no other side of his personality is shown--as it could not be in a short story, if only for the length. The ending of the story intensifies his dominance on one of the girls, for the other is killed by the falling of a tree which the man has been cutting down. Now the other girl will marry

him--her friend has been objecting to the romance--and his influence is so strong upon her that she is not resentful about the accident. This suggests that the original relationship between the two girls was not all it appeared to be, and that the young man's intervention bettered the situation, for one girl at least.

"The Prussian Officer", Lawrence's most highly appreciated and best known story, written in 1911, presents characters who are again ideas. It is the story of an army officer and his orderly; after being insulted by him, the orderly kills his superior. The younger man is one who never thinks deeply. As Lawrence states:

He seemed never to have thought, only to have received life direct through his senses, and acted straight from instinct.

He is the symbol for innocence and good as opposed to the captain who is hatred and perversion.<sup>1</sup> Yet there is an aura of fallen nobility about the captain:

He had ruined his prospects in the Army, and remained an infantry captain...Perhaps the man was the more handsome for the deep

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1. It has been suggested by critics--Frank Amon in particular--that this story involves the universal fable of the Fall of man, the loss of Paradise. Frank Amon, "D. H. Lawrence and the Short Story", in The Achievements of D. H. Lawrence, Norman, Oklahoma, 1953, p. 226.

lines in his face, the irritable tension of his brow, which gave him the look of a man who fights with life.

Lawrence carefully contrasts the two men; the orderly is ruled by his 'warm full nature', and his superior is 'dominated by mind'. An overtone in their relationship is the suggestion of homosexuality which arises in both men. The younger man, while rubbing down the captain, admires "the amazing riding muscles of his loins" and is aware that "an undiscovered feeling had held between the two men". The captain "became aware of his servant's young, vigorous, unconscious presence about him" and is attracted by the youth's "strong, young shoulders and the bend of his neck". Both men do not want the relationship to grow, and suppression twists attraction into an uneasy hatred which culminates in a burst of outrage when the captain kicks the orderly down the stairs. The latter feels that he has been physically and emotionally insulted, while the captain erases his feeling and is 'successful in his denial'. The orderly kills the captain and is released from his dominating influence. The main ideas in this story are the themes of innocence and hatred; in both cases fear has changed innocence into hatred.

In "The Lovely Lady", Lawrence represents three ideas in the main characters. There is the aging woman



losing her dominance over her son, but it is a dominance which will always be felt even after her death. Pauline Attenborough, 'who is seventy-two and looks thirty', controls her son, Robert, who submits to her will and does not think for himself. An elder son, Henry, has died and she controls Robert as she controlled Henry who:

had died suddenly when he was twenty-two, after an awful struggle with himself, because he was passionately in love with a young and very good-looking actress, and his mother had humorously despised him for the attachment. So he had caught some ordinary disease, but the poison had gone to his brain and killed him, before he ever regained consciousness.

But Robert is loved by his cousin Cecilia, who hears Pauline talking to herself about Robert:

I am disappointed in you, Robert. There is no poignancy in you. Your father was a Jesuit, but he was the most perfect and poignant lover in the world. You are a Jesuit like a fish in a tank. And that Ciss of yours is the cat fishing for you. It is less edifying than even poor Henry.

Cecilia pretends to be the ghost of Henry and talks to Pauline through a rain-pipe (Pauline is lying on the ground near the pipe and Cecilia is on the roof at the other end of the pipe) and warns her not to kill Robert as she had surely killed his brother. Pauline is shocked into telling Robert the truth about his father, and she dies jeering at

his, and Cecilia's, ineffectuality. Little did she realize how ineffectual Cecilia really was! Cecilia is a symbol of the breaking of the harmony between mother and son, and yet she is unable to grasp the situation completely. Robert signifies a man who might have been strong, but who has been thwarted by his mother; yet he has hope for a better existence. As he says:

I have a heart. But it's almost sucked dry. I know people who want power over others.

This statement is a clue to the symbol of Pauline. She is one who has been living by dominating her family, and she dies exasperated and irritable. She leaves her mark, however, not only by the direction which she has given to Robert and Cecilia's personality, but by leaving her son and Cecilia little money, and endowing a 'Pauline Attenborough Museum'. Lawrence sympathetically drew the picture of a dominating mother in Sons and Lovers, but in "The Lovely Lady", his antagonism to the controlling type is less sympathetic than embittered.

Closely related to the idea-symbol of character presentation in the short stories is the handling of the setting. Lawrence's settings play an important part in his stories, not only by their apt relationship to the

idea portrayed in the characters, but by their rhythm which suitably coincides with the mood of the story. Lyrical quality in atmosphere is Lawrence's greatest contribution to the short story.<sup>1</sup> By choice of mood and flow of phrase, atmosphere is intensified and the story is greatly strengthened. This quality is present in every type of Lawrence story. He applied the natural rhythms of spoken English to his nature imagery to give a direct feeling of the mood not only of the story, but in the speaker. From "Sun" there is:

She was fortunate. Weeks went by, and though the dawn was sometimes clouded, and afternoon was sometimes grey, never a day passed sunless, and most days, winter though it was, streamed radiant. The thin little wild crocuses came up mauve and striped, the wild narcissi hung their winter stars.

Natural spoken emphasis is present here and the rhythm makes the mood subtly grow. "The Man Who Loved Islands" is the best example of this.<sup>2</sup> A simple story of a man who isolates himself from civilization, going from island to island until he is left alone in overwhelming

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1. Some of his stories gain a great deal by being heard rather than being read; all Lawrence's stories can be read aloud effectively.
  2. Where the central figure is based on an idea, rather than the character of, Compton Mackenzie. Frequently his stories are based on his thoughts of people he knew.

elements, it is Lawrence's best study as far as nature imagery and rhythm-suiting-mood is concerned. On the first island:

Followed summer, and the cowslips gone,  
the wild roses faintly fragrant through  
the haze. There was a field of hay, the  
foxgloves stood looking down. In a little  
cove, the sun was on the pale granite  
where you bathed, and the shadow was in  
the rocks. Before the mist came stealing,  
and you went home through the ripening  
oats, the glare of the sea fading from the  
high air as the fog-horn started to moo on  
the other island. And then the sea fog  
went, it was autumn, the oat-sheaves lying  
prone, the great moon, another island rose  
golden out of the sea, and rising higher,  
the world of the sea was white.

It is a warm mood and a quiet rhythm which suits the idea that the man has perhaps found his dream-island. It is much different from the frenzied description of the last island where the man realizes that the reality of island-living is not like the dream. He has found true meaning for the 'no man is an island' theme of Donne.

The days were beginning to lengthen. All winter the weather had been comparatively mild, but with much rain, much rain. He had forgotten the sun. Suddenly, however, the air was very cold, and he began to shiver.

A fear came over him. The sky was level and grey, and never a star appeared at night. It was very cold. More birds began to arrive. The island was freezing. With trembling hands he made a fire in his grate. The cold frightened him.

And now it continued day after day, a dull deathly cold. Occasional crumbings of snow were in the air. The days were grey no longer, but no change in the cold. Frozen grey daylight. The bird passes away, flying away. Some he saw lying frozen. It was as if all life were drawing away...

Short words and phrases beat the troubled mind of the 'man who loved islands' and who is 'cold'.

Lawrence integrated his descriptive writing into the rest of his story. There is never an interruption between the people and the setting; the action and the characters are part of the scene. He never gives a preliminary description of the place, then the people and finally the action, but observes unity of expression to make the story a dynamic whole with a balanced visual image. He employs physical sensation in description, as of the sun in the story, "Sun":

She looked up through her fingers at the central sun, his blue pulsing roundness, whose outer edges streamed brilliance. Pulsing with marvellous blue and alive, and streaming white fire from his edges, the sun! Meanwhile the clouds rose like white trees from behind the mountains, as the afternoon swooned in silence, rose and spread black branches quickly in the sky, from which lightning stabbed like birds.

Qualities of poetry have been transferred to Lawrence's prose, not only in lyrical rhythms as has been seen, but

in the words he used. He repeats himself to suggest more than the formal words evoke, and often incantation is present:

The flesh neutralizing the spirit, the spirit neutralizing the flesh, the laws of the average asserted, this was the monks as they paced backwards and forwards.

Occasionally the rhythm makes for careless writing and the words cease to have a meaning, for Lawrence has given in to the cadence and forgotten the sense. He could adapt easily to varied moods by his choice of language. There is the simplicity of "Shades of Spring", the biblical flavour of "The Woman Who Rode Away", and the tormented essence of "The Fox" and "The Lovely Lady". Every aspect of the story contributes to the intended mood.

Lawrence's contribution to the genre of the short story is subtle in its effect. He brought to it unity of expression by relating plot, character, and setting to one central theme. It is the over-all effect which interested him, and he carefully chose a plot which would be intimately woven with his character symbols to sustain the atmosphere brought forth by the idea. Many writers have followed Lawrence's technique, but too many have also followed his predominant subject of the sexual.

There is much more to be learned from Lawrence than only how to write about sex. Some writers have, fortunately, used his example of complete unity of all parts of the story to write about other situations. To examine single aspects of Lawrence's stories--as a thinker primarily concerned with sex, as a character delineator more interested in ideas than in personality, and as a sustainer of mood and atmosphere--is to see failings and deficiencies closely interwoven with huge capacities. But to stand back and look at the stories as a whole is to see the lineaments of a great writer--courage in plot, ultimate unity in expression, and above all a concern with the ideas that prompt the action of man. A free thinker in manner and conviction, Lawrence left a certain mark on the growth of English literature.



Aldous Huxley

Huxley first wins his reader with his worldliness, his complete cognizance of life in every place about which he may be writing. His work is full of cosmopolitan comparisons, wisdom from everywhere, instances from Rome and Paris to Chicago. Although his stories deal mainly with Englishmen, he settles them in diverse backgrounds. In Limbo, the settings of six of the seven stories are in England (the other, the "Death of Lully", is set in the Mediterranean), but in "Happily Ever After" he brings impression of life in Chicago, and in the fantasy story, "Cynthia", he describes life in England and in a science-fiction study of the inhabitants of the moon. Little Mexican, published in 1924, is most multifarious in setting. The title story takes place mostly in Italy, moving from Ravenna to Padua and then to Venice. In "Uncle Spencer", the narrator goes from Dover to Ostend to Brussels, minutely giving the temper of each place. "Fard" has a Paris background, and "The Portrait" is set in England. Occasionally Huxley paints a universal setting--one that could be anywhere--as in "Hubert and Minnie" from this volume; usually, however, he is very specific in giving his stories a reality of an actual place. To read him is like walking through foreign parts with a fully informed guide, a polished man of the world.

There is about his short stories an atmosphere of good breeding; there is little coarseness and very few uncouth characters. He introduces the reader to a world of people of culture and wide experience: artists, statesmen, men and women of the world. There is the beautiful and extravagant wife in "Fard" whose portrait had been painted by Rubens. International café society is portrayed in "After The Fireworks" from Brief Candles (1930). His interest in sophisticated people--sophisticated to a point of being unreal--has never wavered. The attitudes and personal characteristics of Huxley's people are the same throughout his writing career. They are usually the well-polished, well-travelled people whose predicaments captivate an audience interested in the smooth situation--people like Huxley himself.<sup>1</sup>

The single purpose of his short stories is to entertain, to amuse that part of the reading public who look upon the short story as a diversion; he attempts not to elevate his short stories and impose too much thought upon the reader as is done consciously in his novels, nor does he degrade his subject to a low level

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1. "During the 1920's, Aldous Huxley seemed unquestionably the most stimulating and exciting writer of the day...it was the impact of an alert, penetrating and widely ranging intelligence". Jocelyn Brooke, "Aldous Huxley", Writers and Their Work, London, 1950, p. 8.

of humour. From this stand-point, he has succeeded. His stories are well told, the reader's interest is held to the end. Slight though his stories may often be in development, they are ingenious always in construction and they are cumulative in interest. He has undoubted dramatic power and sparkling dialogue; whole stories, like "The Bookshop" for instance, might be transferred to the stage with only the most minor alterations. Limbo is a collection of six stories and one play, "Happy Families". The latter was originally conceived as a short story, but Huxley was so aware of the detail in setting and action that he was putting into the story that he finished it as a play with these aspects arranged in the stage directions. Apart from the actual format of a one-act play being distinct from that of a short story, there can be little difference between the two forms. Both attempt a clarity in structure and plot, aiming at a development in character. Many a writer, after he compiles the ingredients for his work, could use them to form either a play or a story. His decision will be the most important factor of his art. A play is meant to be presented, not read, and depends on imagination and immediate effect, rather than on reflection and memory as does a short story. But since the basic elements are the same, the difference

lies in the dialogue which is very separate from the character and plot. Many a short story lacks any authentic dialogue; Huxley, however, fills his stories with it. Since his interest is always in the idea behind the episode, little has been left for interpretation as to action on the part of a director or actor in "Happy Families". In the introduction he says:

The doyen of the Tyrrell family is a young and perhaps too cultured literary man with rather long, dark brown hair, a face well cut and sensitive, if a trifle weak about the lower jaw, and a voice whose exquisite modulations could only be the product of education at one of the two Great Universities. We will call him plain Aston. Miss Topsy, the head of the Garrick family, is a young woman of not quite twenty, with sleek, yellow hair hanging, like a page's, short and thick about her ears; boyish, too, in her slenderness and length of leg--boyish but feminine and attractive to the last degree. Miss Topsy paints charmingly, sings in a small, pure voice that twists the heart and makes the bowels yearn in the hearing of it, is well educated and has read, or at least heard of, most of the best books in three languages, knows something, too, of economics and the doctrines of Freud.

Throughout the play, statements as "who has recovered her self-possession, rises to her feet", "she shudders and covers her eyes", "his face wears its usual expression of slightly bored amusement. He lights a cigarette." interrupt the play's dialogue until it is obvious that Huxley

should have written this in the short story form.<sup>1</sup> Always his characters and episodes seem to appeal to him from the dramatic side until this element is overdone; then the story usually becomes melodramatic. The impression of real life is lost and an atmosphere of staginess is felt, that exaggeration of effect which is extremely satisfying for a moment but which cloyes when it is present too much.

This leads to the chief indictment of Huxley: his short stories are without deep emotion, without tenderness, without altruism, without the highest powers of the active imagination. He has no social or moral purpose, except to impose his own values upon his characters.<sup>2</sup> Huxley views society rather than life in its deeper currents, a society complex in its requirements and embellishments, but he looks little below the superficial and the temporal. Huxley's is a strong influence in the journalization of the short story: the type of story found in the average popular magazine. He writes his stories rapidly and easily; his style is clear and natural, but

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1. Occasionally other writers--Mansfield and Lawrence particularly--have difficulty in deciding whether a work should be a story or a play. For the most part, many short stories of this period (when there was also a revival in the drama) can easily be put on the stage.
  2. Most critics agree with Jocelyn Brooke when she says that "Mr. Huxley has never ground an axe in his life". ("Aldous Huxley", Writers and Their Work, p. 5.)

it is without distinction. His pictures are vividly drawn and his stories are exceedingly readable--journalistic excellences, but there is nothing inspirational about them, little show of genius, and no touch of the 'literary' in the stricter sense of that word. Like every skilful journalistic writer, he has the power to visualize his scene, to paint characters with vividness, and to make essentials stand out. Huxley, unfortunately, has sacrificed literary form for a journalistic one in order to emerge as a popular second-rate short story writer--a writer with a following; his reputation will remain as such because of the substitution all too often of smartness, paradox, and sensation for verisimilitude of plot and character analysis.

In an age when experiment was rampant in all literature, Huxley's first volume of short stories and his first published prose work, Limbo, in 1920, shows a distinct difference from the work of the imaginative writers of his time. His are stories written in the traditional sense, ones where plot is more important than character, stories which appeal more to the general magazine reader who wants to be 'told a story'. In Huxley's stories the quality of the sketch is always discernible. Most of his tales lack vigour of characterization, sharp-



ness of outline, swiftness of movement. To this, however, Huxley has added reality--the age demanded actuality, and Huxley would be the first to admit that that was what was needed. The writer must speak with authority; he must have seen with his own eyes; and he must reproduce episodes with a verisimilitude that grips the reader and hurries him on as if he himself were a participant in the action. Huxley does this, and he also brings another point of interest to the story: an unusalness--new situations, unusual people, different environments. To Huxley, the short story must be a finished work of art. He was aware that the age demanded compression, rapidity of movement, sharpness of characterization, culmination of impression; frequently he brought these qualities into his stories. Yet he did not shift his interest from plot to character as did his contemporaries. Consequently, his stories remain 'tales' to be read quietly and occasionally. He has given, however, to the story chiefly concerned with plot something which it did not have before: 'finesse', a studied artistry which, from the standpoint of mere art at least, brings the story near to perfection.

Under more specific study, three stories, widely different in scope, reveal Huxley's interest in plot-



technique. "The Rest Cure", from Brief Candles, is the story of Moira Tarwin, a woman "full of caprices and obsessions" who goes to Florence to sooth her nerves, "nerves that couldn't stand the strain of London or New York". She is like so many of Huxley's characters--wealthy, well-known, and well-travelled. In Florence she has a growing friendship with Tonino, an Italian with a flair for soothing loveless women. When her husband visits her, Moira finds him physically repulsive and it is not long until Tonino seduces her. He tires of her quickly because now that he knows her intimately, he is no longer fascinated by the unattainable. Huxley remains on the outside looking in. His voice of the accurate observer is acute, but he does not reveal how Moira and Tonino 'feel' about things. He uses metaphors to explain their love:

He was breathless with love, and it was as though there were a hollowness at the centre of his being, a void of desiring tenderness that longed to be filled, that could only be filled by her, an emptiness that drew her towards him, into him, that drank her as an empty vessel eagerly drinks the water. Still, with closed eyes, quite still she lay there in his arms, suffering herself to be brunk up by his tenderness, to be drawn into the yearning vacancy of his heart, happy in being passive, in yielding herself to his soft insistent passion

Tonino asks Moira for money, which she gladly gives. Later they quarrel and he leaves her. She finds that her purse is missing, blames it on Tonino and his love for her money and not herself, and consequently kills herself. As the servants lay out her body, Moira's purse is found "stuck between the bed and the wall". A surprise ending? No, for this is Huxley speaking and it is rather a study of 'life's little ironies'. The story captures the reader's interest to read on to the end, and it is carefully and often beautifully told. The characters are static, however; there is no change in Moira, no climax in the growth of her personality. It can be argued that this lack of development is Huxley's point, that the people revealed are in fact ineffectual and incapable of change. This may be true in "Half-Holiday" and "The Monocle", but in this story his concern is for the ironical close to Moira's life and the sequence of events leading up to this finality.

In "Fairy Godmother", from Two or Three Graces, published in 1926, Huxley centres his attention on the theme of the weak controlling the strong.<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Escobar gives not out of the joy of giving or of receiving, but because of the control she acquires over people's lives:

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1. This theme is a prominent one in the stories of Henry James.

She liked to endow every relationship, the most casual, the most business-like or formal, with a certain intimate, heart-to-heart quality. She talked to shop assistants about their sweethearts, smiled at servants as though she wanted to make them her confidants or even her lovers, discussed philosophy with the plumber, gave chocolates to district messenger boys and maternally kissed them. She wanted to 'get into touch with people', as she called it, to finger and tweak their souls and squeeze the secrets out of their hearts. She wanted everybody to be aware of her, to like and adore her at first sight... 'The greatest pleasure in the world', Mrs. Escobar was fond of saying, 'is being kind to other people.' Particularly, she might have added, when the other people are young and ravishing little creatures who worship you.

Laden with presents, she visits Ruth and her baby, and controls the afternoon's happenings. Ruth, who is happily married, begins to hate herself for her hypocrisy in accepting Mrs. Escobar's kindnesses, but she does so for the well-being of her sister who lives with Mrs. Escobar. The two girls, had they the chance, could lead full lives, but they are indebted to a 'fairy godmother' who subtly spoils their lives. Huxley draws here a realistic picture of a situation which frequently happens and for which there is little way out. It is a 'slice-of-life' story, painfully true and well told. Again there is no development in character except that Mrs. Escobar gets her way; there is no indication of any change.

Often Huxley uses a story to ridicule pseudo-intellectuals and other pedants. In "The Portrait" from Little Mexican (1924) a newly wealthy man wishes to buy an 'old-painting' for his house because he feels that it is a 'symbol of social superiority'. The art dealer impresses him with a story of a Venetian painting and the man happily leaves with his treasure after paying a huge sum for it. The true story of the painting is revealed at the end of the story when a struggling artist is asked to produce some more 'sham old Masters'. With characteristic irony, Huxley condemns those who actively search for culture and refinement. Though the story was primarily written to expose this attitude which he found in contemporary society, Huxley used it for another purpose. The plot is carefully worked out and the ending is one of surprise. The reader is caught in the web of pseudo-art explication ('the story behind the painting') and in case this has become boring to the reader who appreciates a good plot, Huxley returns to his story and finishes it with a flourish of plot-culmination: an ironical climax. Always Huxley is interested in the reason behind a situation. He seems to perpetually ask the question: why do these things occur? And unlike Lawrence who sees episode in relationship to man's thoughts, Huxley views events in terms of the reason behind action.

In form, the majority of Huxley's short stories are of the short-novel variety. In Limbo the "Farcical History of Richard Greenow" occupies half the volume. Many of these long-short stories could have been shortened and their effect strengthened. Huxley tends to an over-facility which often leaves the story lacking integration. He does not ramble, evade or labour his point, but one feels that he could have said what he wanted to say in less space and, therefore, much more effectively. Linked with this is his method of characterization. Many facets of personality are given to a character, but none are examined completely. It would be much better if one or two traits were revealed minutely and the other qualities only hinted at or not mentioned at all. Never do characters unfold in a Huxley story; rather they are the same all the way through, and have been consciously analysed for the reader. Huxley remains outside his characters, and though he has infinite powers of observation, the individuals are stiff and unreal. Characters revealed by external description usually tend to be more realistic because this is the way the reader sees the people he meets in everyday life. Huxley, however, destroys this illusion by patronizing his characters--always there is an innate air of condescension. Admittedly, he does reveal what makes his

characters react the way they do, but Huxley assumes the role of the master of a puppet-show, and always the strings he uses are obvious. Every gesture mentioned, each minute episode examined, has been too carefully selected so that the impression received is a rehearsed and stilted one. Whenever Huxley does go inside a character's unconscious the whole synthesis of character appears to be contrived. It is always obvious what Huxley is trying to do; in a successful writer this is only seen after careful examination. Characters do not develop, but rather are approached by Huxley in a cold scientific manner. It is as though he were dissecting them for the reader, and pointing out various aspects of personality by given and contrived situations. His characters do not live because of this impersonal treatment; they are only actors in a play of ideas.

The quality of the presentation of ideas is as discernible in a Huxley short story as is the one of the sketch discussed above. The stories are, moreover, really a combination of a sketch and an essay. When he is being ironical as in the story of the dual personality of intellectual and lady novelist in the "Farcical History of Richard Greenow", Huxley has created more an essay in ironic-comedy than a short story. He has chosen his



stories as a vehicle to present his ideas; they are intellectual moments to discuss certain values. An example of this is in "Two or Three Graces" (from the volume of the same name published in 1920) where much of section of the story is spent in the discussion of the qualities of a bore--until Huxley becomes one. There is a tendency to discuss things which are not necessary, things which have little relationship to the story. Huxley mentions some abstract quality in the description of a place or person, and rather than leave it and proceed with the story, he digresses into a dissertation on the abstract. In "Chawdron", from Brief Candles, a discussion of a man's life is in progress. Two men discuss Chawdron's hypocrisy, move then to morals, and then to 'aesthetic heresies', which is in turn followed by:

Not heresies; just obvious statements of the facts. For what is the practice of morality? It's just pretending to be somebody that by nature you aren't. It's acting the part of a saint, or a hero, or a respectable citizen. What's the highest ethical ideal in Christianity? It's expressed in A. Kempis's formula--"The Imitation of Christ". So that the organized Churches turn out to be nothing but vast and elaborate Academies of Dramatic Art. And every school's a school of acting. Every family's a family of Crummleses. Every human being is brought up as a mummer. All education, aside from merely intellectual education, is just a series of rehearsals for the part of Jesus or Podsnap or Alexander the Great, or whoever the local favourite may be. A virtuous man is one who's learned his part



thoroughly and acts it competently and convincingly. The saint and the hero are great actors; they're Kembles and Siddonees--people with a genius for representing heroic characters not their own; or people with the luck to be born so like the heroic ideal that they just step straight into the part without rehearsal. The wicked are those who either can't or won't learn to act.

This diatribe continues for three pages--something which has little to do with the main core of the story: Chawdron's life. Because of his scientific turn of mind, Huxley approaches the subject in a fine analytical way, citing examples and giving proofs. As essays on abstracts these are fine examples; as short stories, they lack any vigour of action and cloud the story's clarity. Huxley does not know when to let a story be a story, for he is too much interested in the ideas to which his writing brings him. He does, however, bring himself up short when he realizes that he has digressed. Then he returns to the plot and becomes too obviously concerned with it. Plot, and the ideas emerging from the plot, overshadow the importance of the characters. In "Happily Ever After" the main character is one-sided and the story fails miserably because there is too much plot interest. Little balance between character portrayal and situation is displayed. When he writes a fantasy-story, again the plot is of much more intrinsic importance than the analysis of

character.<sup>1</sup> In "Cynthia" the characters lack any concreteness due to Huxley's prime interest in the tale of a friend having a romance with the goddess of the moon. All this stems from the fact that Huxley is a man very much concerned with ideas and values--and in his opinion they spring from a given situation. He seems unable to notice that ideas can emerge from the people who witness and experience a variety of sensations. He remains more concerned with the situation than in the individual reactions to it. It is perhaps this interest in episode rather than that of character which made Huxley curiously aware of things mystical in the life around him.

This interest in incident explains Huxley's greatest attribute in his short stories--that of mood explication. He has the intangible gift of being able to produce almost any atmosphere. There is the sardonic interest in irony of the "Farical History of Richard Greenow" and the hilarity of "Happy Families". Perhaps the most surprising mood evoked when one considers Huxley's reputation for the intellectual and the sophisticated is the one of isolation and loneliness best exemplified in Two or Three Graces. In this volume he tells

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1. This is usual in a fantasy story, but frequently the the interest is on the character's reaction to the 'strangeness' presented.

stories concerning the J. Alfred Prufrock type of ineffectual man brought to the attention of the public by T. S. Eliot. In "Half-Holiday" he describes the attempt of a lonely, stuttering dreamer to find companionship; the character, Peter Brett, fails in his search. Huxley has mastered this mood, and the reader feels the isolation of the hero. In "The Monocle" sympathy is aroused for the futile intellectual who wishes to be 'the life of the party'. In these stories Huxley describes the dilemma of the 'wasteland' man, and his aptness at portraying this mood of 'limbo' comes through successfully. As a master of mood, Huxley is unsurpassed.

Huxley, however, added little to the short story's growth as a literary genre. He did influence the writers of the short story in the 'twenties to write smooth stories of sophisticated intellectuals. He did not experiment in new forms, but rather gave his public what he thought they wanted: some plot; many sided, yet shadowy, characters; and 'food for thought'. In the last analysis, however, his contribution is slight for he has added nothing to the tradition of the short story; in comparison with Kipling, Mansfield, Lawrence and Coppard, his work is unimpressive. He did not experiment in an age which was experimenting. And if literature is to be a vital force, it must be allowed to grow--not merely reflect the tastes of the reading public.

Chapter Five: A. E. Coppard

Cunninghame Graham

A. E. Coppard

Indeed, it is not too much to say, I think, that Katherine Mansfield and A. E. Coppard, for all their faults and their debt to Tchekhov, succeeded more than any other writers of their day in assisting the English short story to a state of adult emancipation.

---H. E. Bates, The Modern Short Story

Up to the time of Mansfield and Coppard, the English short story was merely a sketch, a studied episode which was in actuality a part of the larger scheme of a novel. Its writers were intrinsically novelists; they thought like novelists, and their short stories reflected the nature of the novel. Mansfield and Coppard were writers with a lyrical gift--they began their literary careers by writing poetry--and they transferred this quality to their prose. They found their natural expression in the short story, and attempted to shape it into a vital design coloured with the finer delicacy of poetry. Together they lifted the short story from its secondary place in fiction to a position of prominence. Coppard, especially, consciously shaped his stories into compact masterpieces of construction, economy, and apt characterization. In them manner and matter are closely linked, and are an end in themselves. Coppard's stories are not associated to a larger scheme as Mansfield's

often are.<sup>1</sup> Rather, when his stories are finished, he has said all that he feels is necessary. Finely wrought, carefully explained, Coppard's stories are complete; the reader does not wonder what happened before the action began, or what will occur in the future. H. E. Bates compares the stories of Coppard to Elizabethan lyrics--delicate finished products with no other interest arising from them except in their own subjectiveness.<sup>2</sup> The stories of Coppard are crystal-clear; there is never a vagueness about them; never is the reader left in obvious doubt. This certainty, or lucidity, in his work is his most compelling quality, the factor which makes Coppard a distinct writer. His stories are unmistakably artless, free from affectation, always open and ingenuous. He was a sincere and simple teller of tales; in an age which boasted of being astute and knowing in experience, Coppard's unsophisticated stories appeal if only because they are always readily understood and unequivocal.

Coppard very emphatically tells his reader that his writings are not stories, but tales. This is carefully indicated on the fly-leaf of his volumes; when his

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1. Individual stories relate to the New Zealand family. Though the stories are complete separately, a clearer picture of character is achieved if all of them are read.
  2. H. E. Bates. *The Modern Short Story*, London, 1941, p. 123-4.

stories were collected they were done so under the unassuming title of Collected Tales (1948). It was his aim to tell 'tales' rather than 'stories', and he based this theory on the idea that stories were originally told by people, who could not read or write, around the campfire of primitive times.<sup>1</sup> He attempted to capture this feeling in all his stories and inserted asides and commentaries to make his tales approximate the authenticity of the spoken word. His work is more an oral than a written expression. In his reminiscences he presents his ideas on the writing of a story:

I had to know all, everything before I could begin to write. Whatever the plot--if it had one--I had to know the solution--if it had that--before beginning to write. In that way the characters would always be consistent and behave consistently in accord with my plan for them. They were not to impose their personalities on my tales and run away with it.<sup>2</sup>

He did not experiment with his story as a novelist frequently does. Nor did he develop and strengthen the theme as his story progressed; it was completely thought out before he began. That is probably why he stayed in the field of the short story and never attempted to write a

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1. An idea popular with many short story writers. Coppard, of them all, manages to capture a minstrel quality in his prose--probably because he started as a poet.
  2. A. E. Coppard, It's Me, O Lord!, London, 1957, p. 73.



novel--a project which would have been too complex for him. Rather, he knew what he wanted to write and he found that a simple expression of his ideas in a short form gave him greater satisfaction. He realized his limitations, and was able therefore to refine his method of story-writing to a point when it became almost too obviously well worked out. Although he greatly admired the works of other writers and often showed their influence, he said:

I did not want to write like anybody else, nor make the same kind of tale; it had got to be, and it was going to be, a different kind, my kind! What kind I aimed at I had no clear idea, but it would be different in style or something from other men's work, with matter and manner nobody had used before and therefore, absolutely original. Sheer folly to fit yourself out in Maupassant's 'paletot' or Mr. Kipling's trousers--second-hand, anyway, and they won't fit you. Two things were certainly very clear to me. (A) I had never heard people talk in the way people talked in books. (B) Study of the novelist's art was not training for the art of writing a short story, it was murder, their true principles of construction being so opposed.<sup>1</sup>

He felt that the focus of a novel was on a main character, that episodes were selected to display the character's personality. In a short story, however, the character was selected to point out a significant episode. He sums up

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1. Ibid, p. 23

his attitude to the short story with:

The tale-telling function derives from one's actual experience, coupled with the beliefs one has grown into about all one has not experienced. These combine with the immensities of the unknown, dimly realized, to breed and rouse fictions in the writer's imagination. What has this to do with what is supposed to be truth? Nothing. For the fiction-monger must always be more or less untruthful; he has to persuade you that his fanciful view of a certain process or event is a precise and real one. What is important in the art of fiction is not truth itself, but the sensation of truth; he must with his imagination distil something from the mass of life, create an aroma, a flavour.<sup>1</sup>

He attempted to paint a diversified picture of life; consequently there are many conflicting elements in Coppard's work. He never took a middle road with his subject matter, but went from one extreme to another, always careful not to merge them into what he would call an 'ineffectual medium'. On one level his stories are complete with strong realism, ordinary simplicity of common men, and graphic actual description--all mingled with a sort of punning heartiness. On the other level there are the fantasy and psychological studies--interspersed with lyrical passages and subtleties which are interesting in themselves.

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1. Ibid, p. 24.

An examination of a number of Coppard's stories will point out this wide subject matter, and other aspects of his story-telling techniques. The title story of his first published volume, Adam and Eve and Pinch Me, 1921, shows Coppard at his lyrical and fantastical best. The story begins with the consciousness study of a man who reflects upon the beauties of the day. He wanders around his grounds and into his house, and no one seems to notice him. In anger he speaks to his wife, rebukes the maid, and roars at his gardener, but no one hears him. He is upset, but ultimately he comes to the realization that his physical self has been lost for a moment and that he has been projected through time in order to watch himself and his family as they will be in the future. For a moment he has been able to glimpse beyond his present self, to see himself happy with his wife in the future when they have another child. Apart from creating a fantasy, Coppard brings to this tale his acute observations of Nature:

Turning back towards his house again he could see, beyond its roofs, the spire of the church tintured as richly as the vane; all round him was a new grandeur upon the grass of the fields, and the spare trees had shadows below that seemed to support them in the manner of a plinth, more real than themselves, and the dykes and any chance heave of the level fields were underlined, as for special emphasis, with long shades of mysterious blackness.

It is the eye of the poet which helps to paint this opening scene, indicating the 'mysterious blackness' of the story to come; nevertheless, there is a happy denouement at the end.

In "Dusky Ruth", from the same volume, another Coppard is revealed. This is the beautifully told story of a traveller who meets a strangely-exciting girl who works in the inn where he is staying. They are physically attracted to one another, and in the loneliness of the deserted bar hungrily embrace each other. At night he tries to go to her room, but despite their earlier display of tenderness, she asks him to leave. He is frustrated and annoyed but he goes to his room and falls asleep, only to be awakened by her knock. Again he goes to her room to find her weeping, indicating by her nakedness that she is ready to sleep with him. He sees that she feels that she has teased him and for that reason gives herself. He is tender with her, but does not consummate their relationship because of his pity for her unknowingness. In the morning he departs, and she says goodbye, thanking him by an expression in her eyes for his consideration. All that there is needed to be told is revealed. Coppard indicates that with the man's departure the affair is over. The reader does not

wonder what will happen to the man or the girl, or if they will meet again. The story is an end in itself; the episode is well told, with just enough of the personalities of the two people in a rich situation carefully displayed.<sup>1</sup> This is all the reader needs, or wants, to know.

One of Coppard's more carefully wrought stories, "Arabesque--The Mouse", comes from the same volume, Adam and Eve and Pinch Me. In this story a man is reminded of his mother as he thinks of how squeamish he is in setting a trap for a mouse. He remembers--by flashback--his mother's comments on the beating of his heart:

'It is good if it beats truly. Let it always beat truly, Filip, let it always beat truly.'

The next day the mother was knocked down by a carriage and died while her hands were being amputated. As the mouse hunts in the cupboard, there is another flashback as the man remembers his girl friend and what she said to him after he carried her home after a dance:

'O, how your heart does beat; does it best truly--and for whom.'

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1. The only criticism against this story could be that more facets of the character's personalities should be revealed. I feel, however, that Coppard has sufficiently drawn the man and the girl.

He calls her 'little mother', but before he can continue with his memory, he is brought back to reality to find the mouse away from the trap but with its forelegs broken off. He throws the mouse out the window, puts the forelegs in the fire, and resets the trap. His life will go on, and he will not be disturbed by the memories of the past. This summary may make the interweaving of incident appear too obvious, but in the story the recurrence of the 'truly beating heart' and the broken arms (or forelegs) is subtly worked out. With the episode of the mouse, Coppard has told the story of a man's life--an unusual device, but an extremely effective one.

Adam and Eve and Pinch Me indicated Coppard's powers as a short story writer--his diverse subject matter, his ability to evoke many emotions, his tendency to slightly colour his work with sadness--and in ten years he published eight volumes of short stories. Examples from some of these volumes should be examined here if only to point out various aspects of his work.

"Luxury", from Clorinda Walks In Heaven, 1922, shows another facet of Coppard's work:

Eight o'clock of a fine morning in the hamlet of Kezzal Predy Peter, great horses with chains clinking down the road, and Alexander Finkle rising from his bed singing: 'O lah soh doh, soh lah me doh',

timing his notes to the ching of his neighbour's anvil. He boils a cupful of water on an oil stove, his shaving brush stands (where it always stands) upon the window ledge ('Soh lah soh do-o-oh, soh doh soh la-a-ah!') but as he addresses himself to his toilet the clamour of the anvil ceases and then Finkle too becomes silent, for the unresting cares of his life begin to afflict him.

This story comes directly from Coppard's own experiences; it tells of an ordinary day in a writer's life, a writer who gave up his job to the surprise of his employer, who started out with fifty pounds and a gift from his fellow workmen. All these things had actually happened to Coppard, but in the story he has imaginatively changed them around. Where with Coppard the workmen gave him ten pounds, it is the employer in the story who does so and the workmen who give him an ornate clock. One paragraph is straight from Coppard's life:

And indeed he was very impoverished, the living he derived from his writing was meagre; the cottage had many imperfections, both its rooms were gloomy, and to obviate the inconvenience arising from its defective roof he always slept downstairs.

The writer tells the story of his day and ends by describing the 'luxury' of eating four bananas in one sitting instead of rationing them out for four days, and ends with:

'but then he sat down and wrote all this, just as it appears.



It is a simple situation, and Coppard has elevated it to a higher plane by a marked simplicity of telling a story as it occurred, and by a hint of pathos. Very easily the story could have been mundane or ridiculously pathetic, but Coppard, with his usual restraint, has created a sincere story which charms by its simplicity.

Comedy is his forte in "Alas, Poor Bollington" from The Black Dog, 1923. In it, Bollington tells the story of how he left his wife--a ridiculous situation made obvious by Bollington revealing his own prosaic personality without knowing that he is doing so. The story concludes with the husband and wife meeting and discovering that they have been having idle dreams. Both have thought that they have walked out on each other; the irony is that they did it at the same time, both thinking that they had hurt the other and not knowing their mate's similar actions. The story is told by Bollington and is set in the framework of a reminiscence of a member of a club to which Bollington belongs. It is a story within a story; Bollington reveals his own personality by his own dialogue, and the narrator in the framework does not comment, but only presents the tale. Again the story is complete, and no more is needed to explain the repercussions of the situation. It is a

casual episode well told. Other writers often leave a problem to be solved by the reader, but in Coppard's stories the reader's inquisitiveness is solved, and he reflects only on the action and the character revealed by the author.

These stories have been mentioned to point out the diverse subject matter of Coppard's work. Though his themes may be different, they are always about the same kind of people. His characters are ordinary individuals with average emotions who live in a world not of their own choosing but who are content with things as they are. It is a middle-class world, a world where nothing catastrophic happens, and where life continues at the same pace. There are no heroes in Coppard--no Hamlets or Lady Macbeths--just as there are no incidents of magnificent proportions. What does happen are things that are only important to the people they concern, people who take things as they come and who realize that life continues regardless of their own intimate emotional situation. The only emotion which his subjects have in common is sadness, a sadness which comes with reflection. Coppard started to publish his stories when he was past forty, and this probably explains the reflective quality in all his work. He had no intimate family circle on which to draw for his stories; he lived alone, and he

saw things in relation to his past. He felt that his life had not been complete, that he had accomplished very little; consequently, though he was faced with the present task of writing and earning a living from it, he could draw only on his past. This is seen in his stories when characters look back on things as they used to be. Examples of this can be witnessed in "The Field of Mustard", 1926, when two women discuss a former lover they shared; in "The Presser", from Silver Circus, 1928, where Coppard transferred his own experiences of 1890; and in "Doe" from Dunky Fitlow, 1933, a story based on observations made when Coppard lived in Oxfordshire. Though his stories are about days past, Coppard never has a sociological or psychological axe to grind. A moral or a pointed theme would not have coincided with his aim to tell a story, a tale complete in itself.<sup>1</sup>

Coppard's idea was to 'tell a tale' and his stories have much in common with folk-lore and legend. They begin simply, either with description of a place or person, bringing in as much local colour and information as possible. From "Doe", there is:

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1. Though the early minstrels often finished their tales with a moral, Coppard felt that his purpose was only to tell the tale. The moral was left to the reader (or listener) to interpret from the action.

The Reverend Phalarope Doe, fondly referred to by his choir as Sammy, was vicar of a village in the South Country. His church and his vicarage, hung over by pastoral elms, were hunched beside a lucid stream near a bridge of stone; the water smiled under its arches, the fish hung dreaming in its tide. Just beyond the bridge the road forked at a triangle of grass where two vast lime trees towered above a tiny tiled hut with a padlocked door; the hut, never opened, and plastered with bills of circuses long remote in time and place, harboured a sort of fire-engine that had never been used, that only a few old men had ever seen. Then you came to the village on the flank of a small hill.

This is really conversation, that which attempts a close relationship between reader and author. It is as though he were trying to limit other conversation by being intimate so that people would listen to the story he is about to tell. Frequently there is a story within a framework. As has been mentioned, in "The Field of Mustard" two women talk as they have a rest during the gathering of kindling, and in "Alas, Poor Bollington" the story is told inside the framework of a club conversation at the bar.<sup>1</sup> Though he gives himself different names, the narrator is always the same, trying to strengthen his relationship with the reader with asides. In "Nixey's Harlequin", 1931:

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1. This is similar to that of Kipling with his stories centred in a lodge framework, or those of Conrad with his stories told over cigars and drinks.

I must explain about Sally and me before I tell you the terrible thing that happened. I ought to tell you about the terrible thing first, I ought to begin with that because it is what the story is about, and desperately tragic, I can tell you. But as it happens there are two men named Wilson concerned, one of them very wickedly concerned, and my name is Wilson. It is a common enough name, you couldn't have anything commoner than Wilson, and I have told everybody that I am not the guilty Wilson; I am indeed as innocent as a newborn babe, but nobody believes me, they just grin.

Though he may shift his occupation and interest occasionally, it is usually Coppard, the man, who tells the stories of Coppard, the writer. In his reminiscences he says that he based most of his stories on his own experiences, or on the events of people he knew or heard about. Always the tone is of Coppard, whether it be of his own past as in "The Presser" relating to a position he had in London when he was twelve; in "The Cherry Tree" when the boy comes home from London to his widowed mother who works in a laundry (direct from Coppard's own life); or in "Doe" or "The Higgler", from events he had heard about in Oxfordshire. The tone and the technique of his stories are always the same. Invariably there is the mood of after-dinner conversation, easily told and not embarrassingly intimate. The plot at all times is the most important, and usually it is an everyday episode which could happen to anyone. The characters are uniform, with

the same values and tricks of conversation--the only difference is that some are more given to common wit than others. These qualities make up a typical Coppard story.

H. E. Bates, however, criticizes Coppard for not staying close to this aim, and accuses him of becoming more literary as his career continued. Bates feels that there was a gradual detraction from Coppard's "yeoman achievement" by sophisticated influences. He accuses him of provincial journalese, as in:

He was of years calendared in unreflecting  
minds as tender years. ("Communion");

of pretentious word play meaning little in the story, as in:

They were like two negative atoms swinging  
in a medium from which the positive flux was  
withdrawn. ("Craven Arms").<sup>1</sup>

It seems that Bates has carried out an indefinite criticism of Coppard's style. Admittedly, there are lapses in his style, moments when the use of words does jar the story's effect, but the disturbance is only for a moment. Bates charges him with pretentiousness and finds it a fault. But surely this is rather a part of Coppard's

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1. H. E. Bates, The Modern Short Story, London, 1941, pp. 136-7.

simple aim to tell stories of ordinary people. His characters may have pretentious moments but this is a section of their personality. When there is some 'provincial journalese' in Coppard, it strengthens the story because it is so obviously there. His aim was for oral descriptions of events and characters, and this aim is fulfilled by the device of stereotyped phrases, poor metaphors and over-confident spontaneity. His narrator would talk in that manner in order to impress his story on his listeners. Coppard tells us that he wrote with great care, noting down metaphors he had heard, storing up phrases; he put these into his stories to give them a greater authenticity--and simplicity.

Coppard spent many years of his life in business and it was not until he was forty-three that his first volume of short stories was published. During his working hours he had written many stories and when he came on the literary scene he had much material ready for publication. If his stories had been published as he wrote them, it would perhaps be possible to see a development in his work. As it is, there is no conscious change in his method of presenting a story from his first volume, Adam and Eve and Pinch Me, 1921, to You never know, do you?, published in 1939. Between the two world wars Coppard



published twelve volumes of short stories. The best of his work lies in the first six volumes, that is up to Silver Circus, published in 1928. He was interested only in the story for its own sake; he did not reflect the age of hopelessness as did the majority of writers in the 'twenties. He told his stories and they were an end in themselves. He chose as his background the countryside of Oxfordshire, and things that are ordinary and provincial in the English way of life. He wove his tales well, colouring them with lyrical descriptions, a strong sense of humour, and a delicate gift of tragedy. His attitude was always the same: to tell a tale.

Coppard was a sincere and simple author, who wrote stories showing a unique ability to tell a complete tale. Showing does not necessarily mean displaying. Coppard's stories, indeed, make little obvious display at all. That, perhaps, is why many people prefer Huxley and Lawrence. Coppard's work is simple, sincere, and free from affectation. His full appeal is not immediate. His stories withhold their more subtle pleasures for discriminating admirers. His works need knowing--knowing with some understanding of the life of the man behind them who gave up a secure, but ordinary, position at the age of forty in order to live by himself in a secluded

cottage and write about the average people he had encountered in his matter-of-fact life. Given that understanding, however, it is very rewarding--rewarding literally to a large degree: not merely in the number of separate examples of fine stories, but in the way that they go so well together as to produce a wonderfully rich and varied picture of ordinary people.

Cunninghame Graham

Cunninghame Graham, whose works occupy so prominent a position in Scottish literary history in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is an author who is now little known and less read. In a study of the growth of the English short story he should be mentioned, for his work represents the short story of vital reality. Almost everything that he wrote had happened, and usually to him. His was a varied and exciting life as contrasted with the ordinary experiences of everyday people recorded by Coppard and Kipling. Cunninghame Graham's episodes are strange and mysterious, yet they are true. His work should be examined if only because it poses an important question in the growth of the short story: how much plot does a story need in order for it to be called a short story?

A story may be just a picture of a 'slice-of-life' drawn by the writer to portray a certain situation which often has universal qualities; it may be merely the drawing of a person, focussing on one or two aspects of his character to point out certain themes in general personality growth; or it may be barely an episode in everyday life whose only appeal rises from that very everyday quality. All these types of stories cannot be

called 'short stories' in the fundamental sense of those words; rather, they are sketches or episodes. Then what is the distinction between a story and a 'sketch'? This question points up many others in relationship to distinctions between various forms of creative expression.<sup>1</sup> The negative approach cannot be used here to say what the 'sketch' is not as distinct from what the story is. They can begin and continue the same way, and except for one part of their make-up, they are identical. The short story has something which the 'sketch' lacks, something which brings it up to and beyond the confines of an ordinary level of flat description. Though it is not necessary for it to have a distinct plot, a story, if it is to be a story, must have a psychological turning point or 'juncture'. A story, with this juncture, has a concurrence of previous events which produce a quick and usually radical change on either the main plot or on the situation and personality of one of the main characters. A sketch, lacking this juncture, is little more than accomplished reporting of events seen or imagined.

Cunninghame Graham is perhaps the best modern expositor of the well-drawn sketch. There is no doubt

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1. Elsewhere in this thesis the distinction between a short story and a novel is attempted. pp. 2-6.

that this is because of the vital and interesting personality which exudes from his writings. His work was drawn from memory of his own observations and adventures; and no one could have had a more actively exciting life than had Cunninghame Graham. Descended from Scottish kings and Spanish nobility, born into a noted Scottish family, he spent his life in active pursuits. At the age of seventeen he went to Argentina and worked as a horseman on the vast plains. He and his wife tried to ranch in Mexico and Texas, and only returned to Scotland to pay off the debt which his father had incurred against the family estate. He was a member of parliament for Lanarkshire and was nearly trampled to death in a protest meeting in Trafalgar Square; and he went to jail for his part in that action. He travelled in North Africa disguised as an Arab Sheik in order to see a forbidden city. He continued his active life and died at the age of eighty-four in Argentina where he had gone to ride the plains once more. He was a romantic who insisted upon drinking the cup of life to the last drop.

There is about the writings of Cunninghame Graham a distinct stamp of his most remarkable personality. He was one of the last of those heroic men concerned with the sense of a challenge. Aristocratic in background and

and temperament, he judged men as he found them, and not because of their social background; and this gave him friends in every strata of society. Unlike many writers whose masculine virility is tinged with the coarse, Cunninghame Graham was a fine example of good breeding and taste. I have been fortunate in being able to talk about him with Miss Wendy Wood, who was closely connected with him in the Scottish Nationalist Group. When it is possible for Miss Wood to disregard her active hatred of the English for a moment, she is an amusing and vital speaker whose brilliant conversation reflects an extremely quick mind. Naturally, she had praise for Cunninghame Graham, but not only because of his ideals for Scotland. She talked about his qualities of purpose, and his fine gestures when speaking to a silent and controlled crowd. What she remembered most about him was the fineness he gave to their cause. Under his influence it did not become over-emotional or full of chaos. She also remarked on the quality of sadness which always seemed to be in the background of his actions and his thoughts. This gave to me the clue to an interpretation of Cunninghame Graham's work. The masculine virility is always there, but also there is an undercurrent of the melancholy. It is a sadness evoked by the awareness that life moves too quickly and that joys are too soon over.

This idea can be equated with that of Dylan Thomas and his "Time held me green and dying". Life and its compelling brevity was Cunninghame Graham's greatest interest.

This interest in life as he saw it explains why it can be said of Cunninghame Graham that he did not write 'fiction'. His work, rather, is a recapitulation of things he had witnessed and experienced. Great plots are missing from his work, and there occasionally arise tales from his imagination which are quite unique. Neither are there great characters in his stories except for the impressive Cunninghame Graham himself. He is so much a part of his own writing that he emerges as an unforgettable character. One of the charms of his work lies in the fact that it is indelibly stamped with the personality of the writer. But this required no action or creative insight on the part of Cunninghame Graham, for he put down on paper exactly what he had experienced. No doubt there have been personalities as arresting as his, but he was able to write about his life in such a way as to bring out his own character and his own reaction to the life he led.

Then what is it that Cunninghame Graham did in order to express his distinctive personality to the reader?



His English is full of grammatical mistakes; the punctuation is atrocious, and the spelling is variable. Frequently there are awkward phrases which rereading only tends to confuse more, and many of his introductory preambles are boring and very unnecessary. It is his sincerity as a writer and as an individual which brings to his work an authenticity and charm seldom found in writings which are purely factual. When he was faced with a good episode in reality, he did not embroider it with fatuous descriptions or morals which would spoil the story's impact. Rather, he left things as he found them, describing them in his own conversational style. He realized that as an imaginative writer he was extremely limited, and that in verisimilitude lay the foundation of his success as a writer. Nature had given him an interesting life; Cunninghame Graham gave it back to his readers in the exact form that it had been given to him.

One of the most notable of these personal stories is "Prisoners of the Kaid", taken from Cunninghame Graham's book, Mogreb-el-Acksa. In it he tells of an imprisonment which stopped his journey to see the forbidden world-famous city of Taradant in the province of Sus in North Africa. He was frustrated in his attempt to see the

capital city, but this disappointment did not colour his ability to appreciate fully the unusual experience of being a prisoner of the Kaid. The story is told in a straight-forward fashion and it is not made into a vehicle for moralizing on lost travellers in foreign places or on Arab pastimes. Nor does he succumb to the flashback method of story-telling so that the reader is put at ease knowing the outcome of the affair. It is a chronological report about an incident which he could not forget:

At last we neared the castle by the roadside, no one seemed stirring near it, and we were just about to pass the gate when a loud shouting just below us made us turn our heads. To our amazement we saw our friend the messenger accompanied by several well-armed men, bounding up the steep road like an 'audad' (moufflon), and shouting, in Shillah, in a voice to wake the dead. Men rushed out of the castle and ran for their horses, and the messenger arrived just as we were about to pass the door. We stopped, and putting on an air of quiet citizens, alarmed upon the road, asked what the matter was, although we knew.

This tone of factual statement is continued throughout the whole incident. He does not create an element of surprise in telling of their release because in reality it came gradually and was not unexpected. Nor does he use his surroundings to recall incidents of the past or to conjure up imaginative stories--as do many people when they

are imprisoned, if only to stop themselves from going mad. Cunninghame Graham was not in solitary confinement, and many interesting things were going on around him and he recorded as much as he could. 'Stream-of-consciousness' writing is also unknown to Cunninghame Graham. Rather than use this method, he records things as they happened around him. It is not reporting, but 'recording'--if a difference of meaning between the two words can be accorded.<sup>1</sup>

The only time that Cunninghame Graham becomes literary in these stories is when he deals with a description of something which particularly appeals to him. Then he uses metaphors and similes to record his emotions. This is something which we are all inclined to do when actual words do not seem to do justice to a particular scene:

Under the moonlight, the distant plain looking like a vast steely-blue sea, the deep red roads all blotted out, and the palms and olives standing up exactly as dead stalks of corn stand up in an October wheat-field; the omnipresent donkey and the camels of the East asleep, hobbled or straying in the foreground beneath the walls, and the mysterious, silent, white-robed figures wandering around like ghosts. The town appeared to me to look as some Morisco village must

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1. Reporting is more closely aligned to that part of writing associated with journalistic pursuits.

have looked in Spain when the Mohammedans possessed the land, and villages brown, ruinous, and hedged about with cactus-like Asif-el-Mal, clung to the crags, and nestled in the valleys of the Sierra de Segura, or the Alpujarra.

When faced with something completely out of his realm of experience, he would describe minutely, as in "Los Indios" from A Hatchment:

The terror and romance of the south frontier were centred in the Indian tribes. When they broke in amongst the great estancias of the south, all but the chiefs riding upon a sheep-skin, or without even that, carrying a lance made of bamboo, a fifteen to twenty feet in length, the point a sheep-shear, fastened to the shaft by a piece of a cow's tail, or other bits of hide wrapped round it green, then left to dry till it became as hard as iron, and with a tuft of horsehair underneath the blade, looking like a human scalp, the deer and ostriches all fled in front of them, just as the spin-drift flies before a wave.

Descriptive power added much to the appeal of his stories, particularly when he was dealing with countries and habits with which his reader was not already acquainted. In that way, Cunninghame Graham's books have the extra attraction of travel literature; for he lived in an age when people in Great Britain were very interested in the lives and experiences of Britons overseas.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Kipling satisfied an interest in life in India which the people in Britain had in the late nineteenth century.

Not only did he deal with himself in these stories, but also in the adventures of others. "Tschiffely's Ride" tells of the hardships of a man named Tschiffely who travelled with two Argentine horses from Buenas-Aires to New York. With painful accuracy--painful in that the ride had many severe moments--Cunninghame Graham relates this episode which caught the imagination of the whole world and particularly that of the three continents through which Tschiffely passed. It is a record full of respect for a courageous man and his two equally brave horses, and yet the story does not descend into a picture permeated with hero-worship. Tschiffely repaid Cunningham Graham's respect by writing a biography of him called Don Roberto, the name by which many referred to Cunningham Graham. Both men used discreet emotional restraint in their stories of one another to give an accurate, yet human, account.

Only occasionally did Cunningham Graham go beyond his own experience in his writings. Three stories in particular--for they can be called 'short stories' since they have the required psychological juncture--are distinctively unusual in their plot appeal, and are quite separate in tone from his other stories. They are linked with the chief theme of his work, however, because the

the main character in each story undergoes a personal crisis brought about by some awareness of the challenge in life.

"The Gold Fish", published in Thirteen Stories, 1900, tells the story of a runner who is given the job of carrying a glass bowl with seven gold-fish in it from Rabat to Tafilet. He is told not to break the bowl, and then he gets lost in the desert where:

Under a stunted sandarac tree, the head turned to the east, his body lay, swollen and distorted by the pangs of thirst, the tongue protruding rough as a parrot's, and beside him lay seven golden fish, once bright and shining as the pure gold when the goldsmith pours it molten from his pot, but now turned black and bloated, stiff, dry, and dead. Life, the mysterious, the mocking, the inscrutable, unseizable, the uncomprehended essence of nothing and of everything, had fled, both from the faithful messenger and from his fish. But the Khalifa's parting caution had been well obeyed, for by the tree, unbroken, the crystal bowl still glistened beautifully as gold, in the fierce rays of the Saharan sun.

With this, the story ends; Cunninghame Graham does not insult his reader by preaching a moral to be gained from the story.

In "Beatback for Moffat" from Success, 1902, Cunninghame Graham deals with the story of a dying Scotsman

leaving London for Moffat via Beattock. Like the pure Scot he is, he does not want to die in the English capital, but wishes to return to his native soil. He is accompanied by his Cockney wife and his Calvinist brother. The wife envisages paradise as a music-hall--in direct opposition to her brother-in-law! The man dies as he changes trains for Moffat, but he has come much farther than any of the others had expected. His challenge was to live to see his home again, and the irony of it is that he underwent so much mental and physical pain and yet missed seeing it by only one train change; he was, however, back to Scotland once more. Here the humble man, and naturally a Scot, knows how to die. The journey is well recorded; there is the psychological twist, and Cunninghame Graham, though concerned with melancholy, does not ruin one of his best stories with sentimentality.

The third story for consideration here is "The Fourth Magus" taken from Hope which was published in 1910. It tells of the wanderings of the fourth wise man, King Nicanor, who missed the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem and who spent his life caring for the lives of others as he tried to find his goal. He finally does discover Jesus, not in Bethlehem but at Calvary and witnesses a death rather than a birth. His challenge has been that he had



been diverted from his search by his natural characteristic for helping others less fortunate than himself, and that he was the epitome of what Jesus taught that man should be. The last statement gives the story its meaning:

At last, as dawn began to creep into the sky with a pale milky whiteness that gradually extended through the deep, blue eastern night, just as a drop or two of mastic tinges the water in a glass, King Nicanor rose to his feet and said: 'It is now time to rest. Fate has deprived me of the joy of being present at the birth of him the star announced; I can at least be present at his death....and birth and death are not so very different<sub>1</sub> after all.

Although Cunninghame Graham's main interest was in the 'tale' he was telling, he was able to produce authentic characters when he had the opportunity. The three persons in "Beattock for Moffat" are the most unforgettable of his characters. Their personality traits are portrayed by their action and speech; Cunninghame Graham did not suggest personality in a description of the person or explain action in a detailed analysis of the subject. Character was incidental to plot and atmosphere, and with Cunninghame Graham it is irrevocably involved with action.

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1. Since this theme is so closely allied to the one in "The Journey of the Magi", one wonders where T. S. Eliot received his inspiration.

The people are best revealed, therefore, by what they do and say. When he attempted to describe people, Cunninghame Graham did so with a painter's eye. His scenes of Morocco are detailed and precise, carefully observed by one who had seen his friends painting local scenes. When he was in Morocco, he had painters as friends and no doubt acquired from them a painter's eye for detail. His studies of Moroccan life are very much in tune with the water-colours of Arthur Melville. Both reveal a starkness in their work, a detailed attempt not to romanticise the native or the life there. The atmosphere evoked by both is similar in tone. And it is in atmosphere that Cunninghame Graham excels.

Although Cunninghame Graham's contribution to the growth of the short story is slight, his work contains an extraordinary richness of life which few of his contemporaries possess. He was a writer of sketches, and when he rose to the challenge of the confines of a true short story he was very apt. It is unfortunate that he did not use his imagination more in this field, but he had experienced life so variedly that he cannot be blamed for being very concerned with writing that life down. His stories were a reflection of an age which was acutely interested in travel and action, in

romantic but realistic adventure. He found information about the world by actual experience of its mysteries, and recorded these rather than produce writings which were a product of the imagination or a report of a conversation. His work is factual, rather than meditative or imaginative; and it is true.

## Chapter Six: Particular Techniques

### Particular Techniques

Around 1900 there arose among English writers a creative quest for new methods of literary expression. A gradual but firm attempt was made to break away from the established forms of writing, beginning firstly with the novel, then with the short story, and finally with poetry. There was Joyce and the other innovators of 'stream-of-consciousness' in the novel; there was the inception of modern poetry which was to flourish with Eliot and his contemporaries; and, more important for our interests here, there was the short story which was soon to become a separate genre of its own with standards distinctive from other literary forms. No longer was the story to be a sketch or studied episode which could be woven into the looser framework of a novel. Until 1900 the story was machine-made, with two dimensional characters solving artificial dilemmas; there was no regionalism, little poetry, and no experimentation. The short story had stopped growing, just as other arts had been reined away from experimentation by Victorian complacency in the world of art. There was little or no hint that the short story would gain new delicacy in the fine hands of Katherine Mansfield, or would be completely

reshaped by others (like Hemmingway) in the 'twenties. Soon the story was not one told by a carefully engineered plot, but by the subtle implication of selected isolated incidents. Arrangement began to play a greater part, and significance lay in what appeared, at the outset, to be casual episodic moments. On the surface, the life depicted in the short stories of the first quarter of the twentieth century may seem to be trivial or unimportant. It was, however, put in such a way as to interpret the individual life below. The constrained plot was replaced by a record of life seen at first hand; this was a realism without Victorian artificiality.

These literary changes were due in part to a conscious--yet sometimes unconscious--revolt against the purely 'art for art's sake' philosophy of Oscar Wilde and his group. Brought to it by the still surviving remnants of Victorianism in his thinking, the English writer in the early twentieth century was very conscious of an unhealthy attitude to life on the part of the writers of the 'nineties. He wanted to abolish this attitude just as he wished to rid himself of anything which was comparable to the thinking of the Victorians. It was because he was so consciously anti-Victorian--although when it came to the earnestness of his convictions, he

was more Victorian than the Victorians--that he began to experiment and look around for new methods of expression. He felt that the twentieth century was a vital age with something new to say. Literary techniques needed innovation; a different means of communicating modern values and ideas to the reader was justified.

The predominant characteristic of early twentieth century thought was one of puzzled and anxious confusion. It was not the first age to feel this, for the seventeenth century had felt similarly and had found solace in becoming the 'age of reason', and the Romantics of the early nineteenth century who had found disillusionment in things around them had eased themselves by the contemplation of the past and of nature. It was the first age, however, to be pervaded by an uneasy and nameless guilt concerning its situation. There seemed to be nothing to save mankind except an examination of the unconscious reasoning behind its confused state. It was the beginning of the age of psychoanalysis with the methods of Freud in the foreground. Every thinker became more conscious of himself and of the reasoning behind his actions; men began to search to know themselves more than they had in any age before. Since



literature surely reflects the problems of its age, writers created their stories with an undisguised interest in the character's reaction to a specific situation until the focus of the story was no longer on the situation but rather on the characters themselves. The aim of literature now was not to tell a story or to describe an episode, but rather to reveal the individual reactions to it.

Since writers were becoming more interested in their own thinking, this introspection became an intrinsic part of their stories. Characters began to be revealed by the thoughts regarding their reactions to a specific situation; they too were looking inward just as their creators were. The reader was called upon by technique to become a part of the story, and rather than associate himself to something which could easily have happened to him, he was now limited to identifying himself with the character. No longer did the reader question the authenticity of a story because of its universal situation which could have implicated anyone; rather, he was concerned because he could see the individuals reacting as he himself would react. His own mind was identified with the thinking of the character, and the story lived for him because he was taking part

in it. The era of the reader sitting on the outside looking in on the action was gone; he was now a part of that action. The short story was no longer an entertainment, but rather was an emotional and intellectual experience for the reader. In the space of a few years the short story was radically changed. It had the tradition of the novel behind it--the novel which had ceased to be primarily an entertainment when George Eliot and others had fused outward action with the character's inner sensations. Because the focus was now on character portrayal rather than on plot, the short story went through a period of rapidly changing techniques and quick growth in characterization.

There are three main ways of describing and communicating personality or character. The first method, which will be called 'external description' here, was the one which was most frequently used, with certain exceptions, by writers until about 1900. Here the personality is revealed by the appearance and behaviour of the character. Appearance includes the face and facial expressions, the body and bodily gestures, clothes, and personal care. Behaviour comprises manner of speech, conduct toward others, personal habits, voluntary and involuntary actions. Perhaps this is the most realistic

manner of revealing personality, for in real life we must infer personality from overt actions and appearances. An example from Dicken's Great Expectations shows this method of character analysis at its best:

Herbert Pocket had a frank and easy way with him that was very taking. I had never seen anyone then, and I have never seen anyone since, who more strongly expressed to me, in every look and tone, a natural incapacity to do anything secret and mean. There was something wonderfully hopeful about his general air, and something that at the same time whispered to me he would never be successful or rich. I don't know how this was. I became imbued with the notion on that first occasion before we sat down to dinner, but I cannot define by what means.

He was still a pale young gentleman, and had a certain conquered languor about him in the midst of his spirits and briskness, that did not seem indicative of natural strength. He had not a handsome face, but it was better than handsome: being extremely amiable and cheerful. <sup>1</sup>

By this method, the reader joins the author on the outside of the character and comes to similar conclusions about the individual's actions. Everything that can be described is presented, and the author joins his impressions into a concrete whole which he gives to the reader in the general summing up of the character. The reader has little to do but to absorb the multitude of impressions and to come to conclusions identical to the author's.

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1. Charles Dickens, Great Expectations, The New Oxford Illustrated Dickens, Oxford, 1956, p. 66.

By the other two methods, the reader, for the most part, must come to his own impressions. Here the role of being outside the story is ended; from the information given to him by the author, the reader comes to his own conclusions about the character's actions and thoughts. Often, the writer has decided what impression he wants the reader to have, and unknowingly the latter comes to the conclusions which the author intended. This direction on the part of the author is casual and subtle, and if not done neatly leads to various interpretations on the part of different readers who are flattered into thinking that they have come to the conclusions themselves, when it has really been done by the author's careful prodding. In 'external synthesis' the writer does this. He remains on the outside of his character, but instead of merely looking at the outside, the writer pretends that he can see through the character and analyses and dissects his personality. Although less realistic than 'external description, this method enables the writer to provide a better portrait much more quickly, and the reader is given more information with less effort. George Eliot was one of the first writers to use this method of characterization, as a selection of lines describing Dorothea Brooke in Middlemarch will show:

She could not reconcile the anxieties of a spiritual life involving any external consequences with a keen interest in quimp and artificial protrusions of drapery. Her mind was theoretic, and yearned by its nature after some lofty conception of the world which might frankly include the parish of Tipton and her own rule of conduct there; she was enamoured of intensity and greatness, and rash in embracing whatever seemed to her to have those aspects; likely to seek martyrdom, to make retractions, and then to incur martyrdom after all in a quarter where she had not sought it. Certainly such elements in the character of a marriageable girl tended to interfere with her lot, and hinder it from being decided according to custom, by good looks, vanity,<sup>1</sup> and merely canine affection.

The pronoun 'she' identifies this type of characterization, and though the reader is told much about the character's mind, he is never brought inside it, is never able to feel that he knows as much about the character as there is to know.

This barrier falls away under the method which may be called 'internal synthesis', commonly called interior monologue or stream-of-consciousness. In this kind of character revelation, the author identifies himself with his subject and attempts to reproduce the flow of his thoughts, sensations, dreams, wishes and memories. From this the reader is supposed to infer the character

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1. George Eliot, Middlemarch, London, 1895, p. 2.

of the person whose stream of consciousness he follows.

An example from Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage shows this:

Miriam ran upstairs narrowly ahead of her thoughts. In the small enclosure of her room they surged about her, gathering power from the familiar objects silently waiting to share her astounded contemplation of the fresh material. She swept joyfully about the room ducking and doubling to avoid arrest until she should have discovered some engrossing occupation. But in the instant's pause at each eagerly opened drawer and cupboard, her mind threw up images. It was useless. There was no escape up here. Pelted from within and without, she paused in laughter with clasped restraining hands. The rest of the evening must be spent with people. The nearest. The Bailey's. She would go down into the dining-room and be charming with the Bailey's until to-morrow's busy thoughtless hours were in sight. Half-way downstairs she remembered that the forms waiting below, for so long unnoticed and unpondered, might be surprised, perhaps affronted by her sudden interested reappearance. She rushed on. She could break through the barrier. Mrs. Bailey's quiet withholding dignity would end in delight over a shared gay<sup>1</sup> acknowledgement that her house was looking up.

A strong bond is created between the reader and characters revealed by internal-synthesis; usually one can see and understand a character more completely where there is strong identification of personality. This does not mean that a reader cannot grasp the personality behind a character

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1. Dorothy Richardson, Pilgrimage, "Deadlock", London, 1921, p. 11.

that is alien to his own, but rather that it is easier to understand the actions of one who has facets more closely aligned to the reader's own personality.

This interest in character for its own sake was destined to have an important sequel that would make a turning-point in the imaginative literature of our time. Between 1905 and 1915 was born the modern short story--a story whose chief concern was not in plot, not in incident, but rather in the character's reaction to that incident. What had taken the novel years to do, the short story seemed to achieve overnight. With this change, it became a separate form of expression; no longer was the short story merely considered an exercise for writers who used it as an introduction to the world of the novel. It was no longer a sketch or an episode, but something of its own and on its own because of its interest in an internal rather than an external reality--a shift from the outer world which Dickens and Thackeray had chartered in the middle of the nineteenth century to a world of conscious and unconscious thought into which there play constantly the life and perception of our sensibilities.

An examination of the prominent innovators of the short story of this period brings one to a realization



about striking similarities. The stories seem to be essentially autobiographical. They contain an unusual infusion of the language of poetry. The writers seem aware, to an extraordinary degree, of their emotions and sensations. Moreover, they were capable of candid self-examination, to an extent even uncommon among writers. Mansfield and Lawrence particularly--and the contributors to the magazines of the period in general--seem to write from an acute need to cope with their own problems and to project their inner thoughts to the reading public. This may be true of all literature, but this time the traditional process of projecting personal experience into a narrative dealing with the outer world was not carried out. These writers of the modern short story sought to retain and record the internal qualities of their experiences. They did not hesitate to record their feelings as they had found them, and they turned away from the fusion of these emotions with an imaginative narrative which would have universal appeal.

What the reader discovers, as he reads many stories of this period, is that these are not stories in the traditional episodic sense. The authors seem bent on effacing themselves--though no doubt their work is based on personal experience--and confronting the reader

with the direct spiritual experience of the characters. There are only occasional shifts from the past to the present; what is happening seems to occur, for the most part, at whatever moment the reader happens to read the story. This is a distinguishable deviation from the way in which the conventional story (sketch) unrolled itself first by introductory paragraphs dealing with scene and general character description with the author constantly telling the story and being omniscient about his characters. A significant change came to the story when the author removed himself from the scene; it created the need to use the inner mind and memory of the character in order to create some frame of reference for the past so that the reader would be as closely related to the character as possible. In a more thorough fashion than ever before, this was an attempt to record as completely as possible every side of an individual's sensations, emotions, intellectual development, and thoughts at the very moment they happened. Literature had given the inner thoughts of characters before--Shakespeare's soliloquies, for instance--but they had been organized monologues presented in reasoned order on the part of the author. They are the conclusions to which the stream-of-consciousness eventually comes. Now the writers were giving the reader the means to this end--

the whole disorganized process of coming to this conclusion. In the best forms of internal synthesis, there is a seeming element of discontinuity, a mixture of irrelevant and relevant thoughts. All of these thoughts are dramatically relevant, however, and the impression of a flow of thoughts in the mind of the character concerned is created, thoughts which in turn flow directly to the reader.

From the moment that the writer begins to capture for the reader a certain kind of mind and a process of thinking, he is faced with serious and important problems. Firstly there is the initial problem of the type of mind which the writer selects. Obviously, if it is a dull mind which deals with trivial things, the writer requires strong resources in order to maintain the reader's interest. Next the writer must disengage himself from his character. This is impossible to do completely, for an artist can only draw upon the workings of his own mind; he might receive the impetus of his thoughts from another person but the only mind he really knows is his own. His characters are, however, a composite of many people he has known and seen, and from their actions he has selected material suitable to make one general character. A synthesis of character may be drawn from other

people, but no creation is ever independent of its maker's mind. Though the author is never seen or heard directly, his intangible presence is there, remaining behind his creation. The next problem is to create an adequate meeting-place between the mind of the character and the mind of the reader. Two mental levels are merged and the writer is successful in his portrayal only when the reader finds that he has lived inside the mind of the characters revealed. By this process of directly involving the reader in the mental experiences of the characters, the modern short story (like the novel) has added a significant dimension to the art of fiction. The writer has arranged the illusion of another mind, and it is the reader who must experience it by avid penetration, piecing together any 'story' that there may be. Character portrayal can be very psychological and the writer may show many parts of a mind thinking, but often the characters all speak the same language--the language of the writer. This similarity is not always a sign of weakness in the story, but sometimes rather an expression of life seen by the author as homogeneous. Lack of distinct personality to a character, however, can easily make long and abstract monologues seem like colourless and monotonous journalese.

In essence the short story of the early twentieth century was concerned with a shift of interest from plot to character, and recorded the inner experiences of the created personality. Before 1900 the reader could only see what the writer wanted him to see. The author was always there, and no matter how much more the reader wanted to know about a character, it was impossible to do so. Only the author was able to tell what the characters were thinking; often, too, he digressed to give reflections and moral judgements on the people to whom he had introduced the reader. In the short story chiefly concerned with character, the author has disappeared from the scene, and gives to the reader the illusion that he is experiencing what is happening. The reader sees extraneous things, incoherent and confused images, and he becomes an actual participant in the story. No longer does he rely upon the report of someone else, for the effect of techniques makes the reader see and feel everything concerning the character. When the reader stops to think about it, he realizes that what may appear to be incoherent has merely been artfully arranged; the perception of the story's complete implications depends upon the mind of the reader who has received the writer's careful and subtle guidance. There is a curious, and almost uncanny, relationship between

the author and character to the reader--unprecedented demands are made for full communication. It rests upon the reader to make the effort to ascertain whether or not communication is possible. Inevitably, it is not always possible; and while the reader may be frustrated and the fault may lie with the author, it must generally be recognized rather as a failure of the two minds to establish a means of mutual identification. This often happens between two different people; there is no reason not to expect it to happen occasionally with some of the literature that we read. Often, too, the reader is taken into a mind where he does not wish to remain. This reflects his tastes, and is no reflection upon the abilities of the writer. Similarly, in everyday life we do not meet people who are entirely agreeable to us. Readers and critics who ask that the modern short story be more concerned with plot have been afraid of something new, and are rather asking that it become so rigid as to eventually be dismissed as puerile.

Rigidity is alien to the short story, and there are a great number of techniques used in its exposition. Only the most prominent ones will be mentioned here, prominent in that they are the ones most often practised and used particularly by the writers discussed in the

in the previous chapters. Because of its aspect of length, the short story is carefully planned by its writer. Where a novelist may begin his work with little idea as to its outcome and hope that this will come to him as he writes, the short story writer should see his story complete before he begins to write it. The struggle, or complication, into which he presents his characters must have a definite outcome, one which is realized before the story begins.

The writer is first faced with the problem of how to begin his story. The use of setting as the starting point for a story is a method which was used by the Victorian sketch writers and by authors writing since their time. The description of a setting--including time, place, occupations and conditions--at the beginning of a story is very applicable to one where the focus is on atmosphere or mood, or on local-colour. The stories of Cunninghame Graham invariably start with a description of setting, because his purpose was to reveal the atmosphere of a place. When the curtain rises, one sees the setting of a scene of a place. So it is with the story which deals with mood, and more particularly with a story whose setting is foreign to the reader. This was true with Cunninghame Graham whose majority of stories deal with life in South America or Morocco, places about



which his British readers knew little. Although important features of the background or setting are pictured near the beginning of the story, details are often presented as the story progresses. Long paragraphs of description slow the story's pace, and confuse the reader; vivid, brief descriptions help the reader to realize the story. With one which has a distinct beginning, middle and end--as with Maupassant--the first part is usually limited to particularizing the locale of the story. A story cannot begin at its most obvious beginning, for a writer means to capture the interest of his reader and quickly lead him to the climax of the story. To some degree in every case--more in some than in others--the story is only made intelligible after some explanation of the background is given. Establishment of setting, introduction of characters, and the definition of basic situations--all these parts of exposition must be presented.

How much is presented depends upon the type of story concerned. In the stories of Katherine Mansfield, very little information about the background of the characters is required, for it is the everyday quality of the characters and the situation which imparts the story's significance. The people in the New Zealand

stories are ordinary people, and the reactions they express show the various attitudes which one usually meets. In her stories it is not the fact of special episodes and unusual characters which is important, but the fact that the episodes and characters are not special. They do not have to be explained. So in "Feuille D'Album" (from Bliss), the young man is any young man trying to meet a girl he admires, and in "The Garden Party", the girl is only a girl learning about death for the first time; the ordinariness, the fact that the emotions revealed here do not have to be explained, is the story's significance. These are ordinary people in a ordinary situation, and little information about their past is necessary. But Katherine Mansfield did not write all her stories this way, and often wanted more to be revealed about her character's past. This is done skillfully by interweaving this past with the present. In "The Man Without a Temperament", a flashback is used three times to sum up the man's attitude toward his wife--his past had to be revealed in order to strengthen the picture of him in the present.

The writer must select significant items in presenting the setting just as he selects the important things in the background of his characters. Setting,

whether it comes at the beginning of the story, or is subtly woven into the plot, is important for what it accomplishes for a story. A vivid and memorable setting increases the authenticity of episode and character; if the setting is accepted as real, then the reader more easily accepts the subject's behaviour in a specific situation. A successfully drawn setting will not make certain actions and improbable characters acceptable, but it does help in establishing a good impression on the reader. Realism in setting only attracts for a while, however, and must lead to something worthwhile in plot or character realism. Occasionally, too, writers will create a setting which reflects the mood of the story's plot. Things inanimate will relate to the abstract mood expressed. Lawrence did this frequently; when there was mystery in his story he used shadows and dark setting; when happiness and truth abounded, the setting was bright and sunny. Whatever the setting, the writer must select only the relevant details and be aware that a few carefully picked items will suggest a whole scene. Though some items are subordinate to others, they are all related to the larger scheme of the story itself.

When a writer does not begin his story with a general description, he starts with something more easily

written and more obviously concrete. He puts his reader into the middle of an incident, with no introductory preamble. The setting and other information which clarifies the plot come gradually, and are part of the situation. This was seen in Katherine Mansfield's "Prelude" when the situation was quickly observed, as though the reader had just come around the corner and seen the preparations for the move in progress.<sup>1</sup> A. E. Coppard begins some of his stories this way, as in "The Old Venerable" (Field of Mustard) and "Dusky Ruth" (Adam and Eve and Pinch Me), but he introduces the majority of his stories with a description of a setting or a character. D. H. Lawrence and Aldous Huxley also both begin with a description, and frequently start their stories after the action has begun.

The other way to begin a story--and in some ways one of the most popular forms--is by the introduction of the narrator. Not necessarily are the events of a story seen through the eyes of the central character. There are numerous other characters in, and outside, the main action who could tell the story. It may be told by an observer who is a major or minor participant in the action.

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1. See pages 95-96.

The narrator in A. E. Coppard's stories--always Coppard himself--is a citizen of Oxfordshire where most of the main characters live, and he serves as an observer of the scene. This also occurs in the majority of Cunningham Graham's work. For the most part, the narration is a first-person account. When the description of action and characters passes from the first to the third-person, there is the 'observer-author-narrator'. This is usually the case with Kipling, and frequently with Huxley. In stories of this nature, the author reveals everything that he can from the outside--everything that is seen, all that is said--but he does not tell his reader what passes in the mind of his characters. When the author does present the inner thoughts of the characters and interprets emotions and thoughts, he moves outside his characters to become an omniscient author, one who analyses all that he can. Katherine Mansfield and D. H. Lawrence both attempt to penetrate one or two minds in a story--those of the main characters; the minor characters are usually presented from the outside, for the very scope of the short story cannot permit the investigation of more than two characters, and usually only one. They used this method to expose character, Mansfield in order to show what people thought about, Lawrence because of his search for the ultimate

behind man's actions.

Kipling used the narrator for various reasons. He introduced another person to tell the story, one who was a very minor part of the main action, yet whose presence is very much felt. In Kipling's lodge stories, the narrator appears and tells the episodes as they happened when he was an observer, or in the Indian stories the narrator tells his tales to his friends as they sit, talking. Conrad practised this method of narration in his novels as well as in his short stories. All of these stories could have been told by the third-person, and might have been still quite effective. The logic behind the outside narrator-observer is quite obvious. One thing, which is an important part of the story, would be missing: the narrator's attempt to understand the main character and the story's actions. The reactions of the narrator provide a basis of reference in order to indicate the significance of the main action. In Kipling's "The Man Who Would Be King", a third dimension is given by the narrator (Peachey) trying to understand the action of Dravot (the main character). At times, however, the observations made by an outside narrator are limited, and conjectures occur as to why certain actions happened. It would be better, perhaps,

to have the main character tell his own story so that a more complete picture of his personality and thoughts is given. But where one method is better in one way, the other is more concrete in another. Either choice is good, and a combination of the two is excellent. This occurs in A. E. Coppard's "Alas, Poor Bollington", where the narrator comments, yet also gets Bollington to reveal his inner thoughts despite his wish not to do so. Bollington reveals qualities in his personality--his unknowingness, particularly--by his thoughtless speech, things which he would not want the narrator to know. At any rate, the important item to be considered in choice of narrator is the author's (or narrator's) relationship to his main character. An appropriate distance should be established between the two, for the narrator should not be present too much, and the character must reveal himself spontaneously without the author's conscious prodding. The plot and the character must be revealed gradually and with a strong sense of authentic spontaneity which captures the reader's interest in realistic story-telling.

Another problem which faces the author is how to end his story. Firstly the initial impulse--the incident or the force which started the story--is considered,



and from that the complication or rising action which culminates in the climax. The conclusion then, must follow swiftly, for the untangling of a plot should be as brief as possible. The reader is mostly interested in how the story ends, and because his interest is focussed on this aspect, it must not work itself out slowly, or the reader's interest will disappear. Though conflict--of plot or character--is the essence of the short story, once it has been adequately drawn and the climax reached, the point of the story is over. Though the reader wants to know the final outcome, it is popular with many short story writers not to disclose what ultimately happened. This is a decision which rests with the reader, and though he may feel that certain items in the story make for a definite outcome, he is always left with the impression that one or two things could have happened. This technique is frustrating to the reader, but it accomplishes a purpose of the author: his story is not as easily forgotten as is a story with a definite ending.

The most important problem which faces a short story writer, one which involves the questions discussed above, is: what length should a short story be? This involves all facets of the story. Kipling's "William

the Conqueror" obviously should be longer than Coppard's "Luxury". In the latter, nothing is necessary to point out the theme of the story except a few immediate incidents, that of the long day and the eating of the five bananas in one sitting rather than rationing them out. In "William the Conqueror" more than the immediate events are needed to point out the theme. The personalities of William and Scott have to be carefully examined; the life in India has to be displayed; the epidemic has to be shown. These things have to be known if the reader is to appreciate the final outcome of the story, and to be able to feel the tone of life in India. In the stories of Lawrence and Mansfield, the fact of change or development in character is important, and therefore must be documented. These two writers are interested in displaying the sense of process in incident and personality, and this involves time and the history of the character. In their stories they foreshorten time; that is, they give the impression of the passing of time without presenting full documentation of it. The sense of the past is given by flashbacks (as in Mansfield's "The Man Without a Temperament") or by a quick series of events (as in Lawrence's "The Fox"). Everything that is relevant to the story is compressed so that as much material for interpretation of theme is given in the smallest amount

of space. Chekhov, as has been seen, influenced this trend in the short story, making it compact and concise. Writers who have been journalists find a compact story easy to write. Their previous training has taught them to say things clearly and in a limited space. Kipling's training as a reporter made him an economical short story writer. Max Beerbohm's work also reveals this training. Even in his "William and Mary" (from And Even Now, published in 1922) which is different--particularly in tone--from his other stories, there is that great neatness which only a reporter, a person aware of the space on a page, learns. Beerbohm is one who thrilled to putting in the exact amount of material, and consequently his tales are stories to be read and not spoken. They were planned to fit the requirements of a certain number of pages. It is a lesson which more writers would learn, for needless information destroys the story's pace. A short story can move at an even pace without becoming monotonous as an even pace in a novel tends to be. But it must not lapse into a slower movement. Huxley often destroys his story's effect--as has been seen--by adding moments of abstract thinking. If these sections had been removed, his story's ultimate effect would have been strengthened. Changes in pace represent emphasis, but the change should

be to a quicker one in order to sharpen the reader's interest. Because a short story deals with dialogue, narration, flashback, summary and the like in a complicated and concise fashion, its writers must always be aware of the length of the story they are telling and be able to weave these qualities expertly. A long-short story has to have careful exposition, and the writer of this form must watch that his story does not become drawn out. It has been noted that Huxley writes stories belonging to this category, and this strongly suggests the reason why his stories do not leave as strong an impression as do those of Kipling and Mansfield, Lawrence and Coppard. The story must move as quickly as possible and its ultimate effect should be strong and clear.

The techniques used by writers of the short story are numerous and varied. No set number of them can make a successful story. That success rests with the writer. He has to have something intangible which enables him to create a story, something in which other people, with the same ideas and the same training, are lacking. Just as there are some people who have an aptitude for design (or painting, or sculpture), so there are people who are able to write stories. In the

final analysis, the 'something' which makes a great short story writer is a something which cannot be defined. It is a part of tradition and innovation--and to call it 'imagination' or 'creativity' is still not defining it completely.

When one looks back from the middle of the twentieth century to the beginnings of the major change in the short story, it is obvious that as long as there is synthesis and refinement, a successful attempt to change a traditional form, an achievement of artistic visions of experience and of beauty, and a constant search for truth in experiment, what has been accomplished in the short story form has added diversity and richness to the literature of our time. Art is always changing; it neither accepts conformity nor does it like repetition. All literature thrives best on the variousness of the age it reflects and on a search for new techniques and new forms. Accepted forms outlive their usefulness. The short story would have died as a form if it had remained merely a sketch or episode--in fact it had never really lived a separate life from the larger world of the novel of which it was the smallest part. When interest focussed upon character rather than upon plot, the short story gained a new place for itself in

twentieth century literature. It is minor fiction at its most triumphant. (In terms of diurnal reviewing, to call a work 'minor' might imply the height of abuse, but it is not in that sense that the term is used here.) It is minor because after all it does deal with the minute in human experience; triumphant, because when it is done well, the short story has the greatest appeal of any literary form.

Chapter Seven: The Story and Its Themes  
Three Magazines  
Conclusion



### The Story and Its Themes

The predominant stress of any work of art is on its content, on its rational meaning and purpose. In the preceding chapters, the question of theme has re-occurred frequently in connection with plot interpretation and character synthesis. A story does many things apart from presenting an account of a specific action or an aspect of a character's personality. A short story is more than reporting and recording a plot, a point examined in the study of Kipling and Cunninghame Graham; and it presents more than just a psychiatrist's notes in the studies of character in the work of Mansfield and Lawrence. A good short story has significance; it says something; it has a meaning.

Because every short story has a definite starting point, it often happens that the general theme--in so far as it can be related to a universal abstract on human behaviour--is confused with the essential creative element in the work. A short story writer may have an important argument or a neat exposition of human behaviour to express, but the short story will not be great unless its author possesses the gift to create a

lasting impression. An excellent theme does not ensure a good story, though it goes a long way in giving strength to the story's final impact. A good short story is not only a report of an exciting action or of an interesting personality, but a thing good in itself, in its own right, in its own presentation of integrated action and character analysis. Only when a short story writer's purpose is misconstrued as reporting can there be any truth in the charge of 'merely recording'. Sometimes if he is so much a part of his action--as was Cunninghame Graham--this criticism can be acknowledged. For the most part, however, a writer draws from his own experiences to create a story, but uses his creative imagination to widen the incident's scope.

A reader goes to a short story--to any form of literature, for that matter--for something more than just a collection of facts about an interesting event or a moralization on life's 'inner realities'. The coordination of a short story to its predominant theme is a complicated one. The easiest way to account for this relationship is to explain the action as a mere illustration of a given theme, one that can be reduced to a few assertive sentences. This emphasizes too much the didactic element in a short story and distorts, and

often destroys, the better intentions of the writer to fuse all the elements in his medium. A good short story does much more than only illustrate a theme; it qualifies and modifies it. The only true account of a theme lies in the complete story itself, in its overall effect; a short statement is only a paraphrase.

The Victorian writer was very much interested in the themes of his stories; he wanted a story which could be reduced to a short statement, something which would, for the most part, be complete with moral teaching. The short story of this period could not flourish, however, because a true short story cannot be under the weight of moral attitudes. The form demands freedom of exposition. The nineteenth century short story had to struggle under the yoke of Victorianism not only in moral teaching but in structural difficulties, for it was an age where there was complete acceptance of the tradition of the heavy style of the great Victorians. The reasons for the rapid development of the short story in the latter quarter of the nineteenth century and in this century are various. The rapidly growing magazine business gave the short story a platform in the late nineteenth century; the reading public--becoming wider, and therefore more middle class--was one that was tired

of ponderous serials and who wanted something to read which could be finished in one magazine. Heavy descriptions and pointed morals had to be eradicated, and because of this the sketch changed in manner. It gradually emerged as a separate form because of readers who could take many things for granted and who preferred a succinct style. It was an age which was becoming more complex and more industrial. The reading public was the greatest influence on the growth of the short story for, in a hurried age, it was more receptive to a carefully wrought and concise story.

The short story, in the first quarter of the twentieth century, witnessed as great a liberation from convention as had poetry in the corresponding part of the nineteenth century. The most predominant difference is in the exploration of the unconscious mind of the characters involved in specific action. This aspect of the modern short story was looked upon by writers as the one hope for a renewal of interest in an art which had been at a standstill for many years. Because of this interest in the inner workings of a character's mind, the attention of writers was focussed on the reasons behind the actions of man, on his prime needs and values. Mansfield, Lawrence, and Huxley took different points of

view in this regard.

The content of Katherine Mansfield's stories obviously indicates her main theme: the universal averageness of people's lives. Her aim was for an ultimate truth which showed that people everywhere experience the same emotions and go through similar episodes. She stressed the ordinariness of their emotions, but with a perception which brings to her reader a new awareness of things around him. It was not that the things she wrote about were different from everyday circumstances, but that the way she wrote about them--in fact, that she chose them as her subjects at all--was different. Until the time of Mansfield, writers invariably wrote of the unusual in human relationships or the exceptional in situations. Writers felt that the public wanted an ultimate in escapism--to be able to read about things which were entirely out of their realm of experience. The Victorian novel and sketch were usually about exceptional people in extraordinary situations, though the people could have existed and the episodes were plausible. Mansfield sought out the average episode and distinguished it by its very average quality. Readers could identify themselves with her characters, could feel

feel that the episode might have happened to them. In many ways, this was an escapism which goes farther than one where it is obvious that the exceptional could never have happened. The New Zealand family could be any family anywhere; the children are those who enjoy and do things that any child would do; and her situations could easily have happened to anyone. This approach to universality in action and personality, this interest in everyday happenings, this revelation of emotions common to everyone--all these made the content of Mansfield's stories point to her central theme. An introspective age needed an introspective writer, and Mansfield filled that place.

D. H. Lawrence took another approach to the question of the actions of an average man. His aim was to discover why a man acted the way he did in a specific situation. It was the reasoning behind the actions which made him display the facets of human behaviour that he did. The majority of his stories are obviously and admittedly absorbed with sex, the relationship between male and female. He approaches this mystery with profound interest, and at the same time with a certain deep and reverent sense. He saw in his immediate world that sex was one of the great motivating forces in life.

He felt that by writing about various aspects of it, by revealing man's thoughts about it, that he would help in some way to achieve some solution which would lead to more personal happiness between individuals of both sexes. By talking about it, he hoped to eliminate its sordid connotations, and in some way contribute to the betterment of civilization. He was in revolt against the Victorian attitude that the less said about the topic the better, the attitude which covered it up and pretended that it did not exist and which, in turn, had no doubt been a reaction against the coarseness of the Georges and the libertine attitude of the Regency. Lawrence reflected a segment of his contemporary society, a section which thought that sex should be discussed more openly, and which felt that its importance was not emphasized enough--an age influenced by its prominent psychiatrist, Freud.

Where Lawrence was interested in man's action, Aldous Huxley was more conscious of the reasons behind situation. Unlike Mansfield, he was not content to draw only the picture of an episode. He tried to discover why it happened. His are stories whose focus is on action, but he takes another dimension to that action. His stories reflect his ideas on the ultimate truths



behind a given episode, and he gives involved explanations on his abstract theories. He deals with, and carefully expresses the lives of, one level of society--the sophisticated, wealthy, and well-travelled. Though he does not examine their inner thoughts, as do Mansfield and Lawrence, he attempts to expatiate why their lives are the way they are.

The three other writers discussed in the previous chapters--Kipling, Coppard, and Cunninghame Graham--also try to explain the lives of their characters. They only occasionally attempt a third dimension, and, unlike Huxley, rarely reflect an abstract quality behind man's actions. Regarding the content of their work, these writers can be discussed together. All three aim at painting a picture of the life they had seen at first hand. Without polishing it until it became unreal, and by leaving people and episodes in their actual surroundings, these three gave to the short story a complete authenticity. Kipling and Cunninghame Graham both wrote about a world outside their reader's experience, firstly because they were a part of that action, and secondly because they wanted the people at home to understand the life in foreign places. Kipling first started to report on things in India, but gradually used his

imagination to make his stories more vital. Cunningham Graham never completely learned to fuse his imagination with the reality, and the majority of his stories show his active tendency to record his life. Kipling continued to write about the life he encountered--except for his children stories, and then he wrote them from the tales he had told his own children--and he carefully fused his interest in plot with that of character to make a completely rounded story. Coppard also wrote about the life around him, reflecting Mansfield and Kipling in his aim to portray the average emotions of ordinary life. This was an age of interest in immediate things. The short story writers discussed in this study all reflect the tendency of their contemporaries to write about their immediate world. They are, for the most part, introspective writers, and their stories are written expositions of things they had seen or heard about. This was not a time when people were writing stories of some past age. These were contemporary writers--'contemporary' in the strict sense of that word--who held up a mirror to the society of their own day. The function of their stories was not merely to entertain the people of their own day; the stories stand as a record of the society in which they were written.

The twentieth century, in the growth of the English short story, completely cut itself loose from the nineteenth. In their revolt against the traditions of their predecessors, the new generation of writers took little time to be fair in their assessment of the past. The Victorian spirit declined gradually and the break-up of that tradition did not occur in a single year or even in a single decade. The years from 1885 to 1910 have unity in the open defiance of the social and intellectual discipline enforced so well by the preceding age. After 1910, there were signs that the tide was turning, or being directed to a more constructive ideal. There was a desire to organize the emotions and the actions of man around common beliefs of the character or of the mind, and this is reflected in the short stories of the era.

Most of the writers of this period dabbled with psychoanalysis; many used it as an inspiration not only for subject matter but for technique. For the most part, these writers are chiefly concerned--in themselves and in their characters--with self-knowledge. This passion is scientific, however, for the aim and processes of a writer concerned with psychoanalysis cannot be fully reconciled with a preponderance of imagination; this

was an age of conscious intellectuality. The most noted novelists of the period--James Joyce, Proust, Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf--are such because of their bold attempt to capture the elementary of the inner life of man; their work is extremely interesting, but their range is obviously limited by a distinct lack of emotional appeal. The short story writer was also conscious of his analytical ingenuity, but the scope of his form forced him to strengthen the psychological substance of his work with an emotional quality.

This quality--or the frame of mind of the period--is one where the diverse and conflicting moods of the age meet in a tone which is of decided rationality which is somewhat despondent in its overtones. Though the atmosphere of the early twentieth century is one of disillusionment, insight into human experience made writers look at things in a straight fashion, and then to see some hope for civilization. The content and themes of the short story are concerned with the basic values of man, the abstract qualities which determine the relationship of one person to another. The aim of these writers was to show their readers the universality of certain values and situations of man to make wider the awareness of the mutual areas of human exper-

ience common to every man.

With a successful style that, for the most part, is a fast moving rhythm of introspection, these writers examined the interminable facets of man's personality. The dominant theme--the one which is the most characteristic--of these short stories is: the mutual lack of understanding between human beings, the impossibility of one person to feel completely in tune with another though his chief desire is to have a deep sense of belonging; and for the most part, the characters are presented and emerge as figures of universality.

### Three Magazines

The tastes of the reading public are minutely revealed by an examination of the magazines of the period. Editors naturally want their magazines to sell, and are keenly aware of the appeal that their product holds for the reader. The magazines of the early twentieth century are interesting in a study of the growth of the English short story in that they reveal the trend of the stories presented to the public, and consequently reflect its tastes. Here, three magazines--which differ widely not only in presentation and content, but by their reading publics--will be examined over a period of three years: The Strand Magazine (January, 1906--December, 1908); The English Review (December, 1908--November, 1911); and The London Mercury (November, 1919--October, 1922). These magazines have been chosen because of their diversity in content and type of reader; they are also magazines which published the stories of the authors discussed in the previous chapters.

The Strand Magazine was an illustrated monthly published in London by George Newnes. Its public was general, one which consisted mainly of middle class people

who read for entertainment; it was the type of magazine one would buy for reading on a journey--interesting but not intellectually heavy. "The Strand" had much popular appeal, and attempted to satisfy many tastes. One noticeable factor about the content of this magazine is the great amount of factual reporting. In "The Strand" there are articles on many scientific subjects, from which people could learn little pieces of information about things in the world around them, information which was easy to read, entertaining, yet was authentic and added to the general education of the reader.<sup>1</sup>

Articles like "The Most Wonderful Dam in the World" (February, 1906), "The New Theory of the Moon" (May, 1906), and "Ambidexterity" (July, 1907), added to general knowledge, though in a superficial sense. Nature lovers were satisfied in each issue with subjects such as "The Life Story of a Wild Orchid" (August, 1908), "Where Bees Swarm" (May, 1907), and "Hunting the Slipper" (September, 1906). Sport enthusiasts, too, were considered; "Curious Incidents in Cricket" (June, 1906), "The Best Games Ever Played at Chess" (December, 1906), and "Up the Schreckhorn in a Storm" (November, 1908),

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1. Similar to the factual reports found in the Reader's Digest today.



were among the diverse monthly articles on various sports. For the traveller, and for the person who wanted to know about other parts of the world, there were subjects like Winston Churchill's "My African Journey" (in four instalments, March-June, 1908), "Across America by Motor-Car" (May, 1906), and "A Day Spent in Kuching" (April, 1906). The illustrations about famous people--a life story in pictures of one person, published monthly--were augmented with unusual information about them, such as "Charles Dickens' Railway Accident" (July, 1906), and "Recollections of Lewis Carroll" (January, 1908). There were subjects such as "What is the Finest Dramatic Situation" (February, 1906)--opinions of leading playwrights, Archer, Shaw and Sutro, among others--, "How a Play is Written" (October, 1907)--a symposium of leading dramatists--, and "My Most Thrilling Experience" (August, 1907)--reminiscences of big-game hunters. For the more educated reader there were "The Satire of W. K. Haselden" (November, 1908), "Mr. W. Heath Robinson and his Work" (July, 1908) and other similar articles.

For a more particular picture of the contents of The Strand Magazine, the following are the contents of the two-hundredth number, September, 1907:

- "The Call of the Tiger"--a domestic adventure story by E. L. White.
- "The Wretched Chamomile"--a nature study of a weed.
- "The Enchanted Castle"--a continued story for children by E. Nesbit.
- "The Golden Isle"--romance and mystery story by Edith Rickert.
- "Some Further Experiences of an Irish R. M."--episodes by E. O. Somerville and Martin Ross.
- "Which is the Most Interesting London Street"--a collection of opinions.
- "Ranji" as a Ruler"--report on an Indian potentate.
- "Riots in the Race Riots"--adventure story by E. P. Bell.
- "The Scarlet Runner"--adventure serial by C. N. and A. M. Williamson.
- "The Stranger's Room"--adventure story of a child by Winnifred Graham.
- "The Universal Tema"--experiences of music.
- "Our Two-Hundredth Number"--history of it.
- "Pictures in Colour"
- "From Other Magazines"--pictures.
- "Our Hundred Picture Gallery"--pictures.
- "Curiosities"--pictures and short facts of unusual things.

As can be expected, the theme and contents of the short stories of these three years of The Strand Magazine are diverse. To categorize the stories as far as content is concerned is not difficult, and seven obvious types occur. Stories for children are predominant, easily understood stories that could be read to, or by, children. Stories of this nature guaranteed a section of the magazine's public, parents who wanted something short and yet worthwhile for their children to read. The majority

of these stories are fairy-tales (E. Nesbit's "The Enchanted Castle" ran from December, 1906, to November, 1907), with the historical story--to teach children history accurately and interestingly--as a strong minority. The love-story was infrequent, but often. mystery stories occurred that had, as a secondary theme, a 'love' element. These mystery-love stories are reminiscent of the two volume Victorian novels of which the work of Wilkie Collins (Woman in White) was the chief example. Mystery without romance indicates another type of story, that where adventure and mystery fuse, as in the stories of A. Conan Doyle. General adventure stories were usually factual, and, because they were more 'report' than 'story', they can be classified as fact-sketches. "The Strand" did not forget that part of the public that enjoyed humour, and every issue contained a domestic comedy (usually by the very popular W. W. Jacobs). Only occasionally would a completely dramatic story--'dramatic' in that it dealt with a universal idea, and could not be put into the categories described above--appear, stories which depended as much upon the revelation of character as on the exposition of a plot. The following table lists these categories and their occurrence in the three years (in 1906 there were 75 stories; in 1907,

86 stories; and in 1908, 82 stories):

<u>TYPE</u>	<u>1906</u>	<u>1907</u>	<u>1908</u>
Children's stories	21	13	7
Love-stories	3	5	7
Mystery-love	7	13	7
Adventure-mystery	16	28	35
Fact-sketch	7	4	3
Domestic comedy	16	20	23
Dramatic	5	3	0

It is noted that the adventure-mystery story, and the domestic comedy, proved to be the most popular in a magazine which prided itself on feeling the pulse of its reading public. Though the fiction in "The Strand" was usually of the short story variety (in that the complete story was in one issue), occasionally there were serials of novels, such as The Scarlet Runner by C. N. and A. M. Williamson (from December, 1906, to November, 1907), and Sir Nigel by A. Conan Doyle (from January to December, 1906). Also to be noted is Rudyard Kipling's Puck of Pook's Hill<sup>1</sup>, a collection of historical stories written for children, which ran for the first ten months

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1. One of Kipling's best volumes of short stories. It is discussed in this study in Chapter Two (pp. 57-60).

of 1906, one story for each issue.

Though A. Conan Doyle and Rudyard Kipling were the most prominent contributors to "The Strand", other authors equally popular at the time were regularly on its pages. One of the 36 issues under consideration here, the children stories of E. Nesbit<sup>1</sup> occur in 28, W. W. Jacobs in 25, C. C. Andrews in 18, Rudyard Kipling in 10, and A. Conan Doyle in 17. Among other contributors there were E. P. Bell (8 times), Mrs. Baillie Reynolds (4 times), Winnifred Graham (6 times), and Arther Morrison (7 times). Once a writer had created a favourable impression on the public, his stories appeared frequently in "The Strand"--a further evidence of this magazine's wish to please its readers by giving it what they wanted.<sup>2</sup> Because this was its aim, its stories, for the most part, did not last--an outcome of a not-too-literary reading public.

The English Review, however, contained stories

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1. Brought to the attention of the reading public by "The Strand", Miss Nesbit's work is still considered to be among the best of children's stories.
  2. Unfortunately, there is nothing like The Strand Magazine on the magazine stands today. It had a combination of material which satisfied many tastes and it has been severely missed by many in all sections of the reading public.

by authors who are very much remembered today. A list of the writers in its first issue (December, 1908) indicates this:

Thomas Hardy: a poem, "A Sunday Morning  
Tragedy"  
Henry James: a short story, "The Jolly  
Corner"  
Joseph Conrad: "Some Reminiscences"  
John Galsworthy: a short story, "A Fisher  
of Men"  
W. H. Hudson: an essay, "Stonehenge"  
Leo Tolstoi: a short story, "The Raid"  
H. G. Wells: a novel continued in subse-  
quent issues,  
Tono-Bungay

This issue established the magazine's reputation; subsequent selling-power reflected greatly upon the authors in its list of contents. Unlike some magazines that have a bright beginning and then quickly fall out of repute, The English Review continued to retain the reputation brought to it by its famous authors. For the first issue did not belie a false beginning, and throughout its career, this magazine continued to publish the works of eminent contemporary writers. This remarkable achievement was brought about by its editor, Ford Madox Ford (Hueffer), who was a personal friend of Conrad, and well connected and thought of by his literary contemporaries. He persuaded his friends to write for his magazine by beginning with little or no financial reimbursement. Though sometimes they complained of

minimum payment, they continued to contribute until their own reputation was extended by their stories in the magazine.

In the three years under consideration here (from December, 1908, to November, 1911) the more famous authors should be noted. In 36 issues, Conrad appeared 18 times; his "Some Reminiscences" was in 7 issues (from December, 1908, to June, 1909), and his novel, Under Western Eyes, was serialized from December, 1910, to October, 1911. Henry James appeared 6 times, twice when the story was completed in two issues ("Mora Montravers": August and September, 1909; and "A Round of Visits": April and May, 1910). The work of Cunningham Graham appeared 11 times (including the famous "The Fourth Magus", March, 1910, and "Aunt Eleanor", February, 1911); and two novels of H. G. Wells were serialized: Tono-Bungay (December, 1908, to March, 1909) and The New Machiavelli (May to November, 1910). Other well known authors were: Norman Douglas and Arnold Bennett (each 6 times); John Galsworthy, W. H. Hudson and Leo Tolstoi (each 4 times); and E. M. Forster (2 times), Edmund Gosse (2 times), Hilaire Belloc (2 times) and Granville Barker (3 times)--the latter three in pieces of criticism. Also publishing in this



review were new and younger writers, ones who gained wide reputations: D. H. Lawrence (his famous "Odour of Chrysanthemums" in June, 1911, and "A Fragment of Stained Glass" in September, 1911) and Wyndham Lewis (each three times). The awareness of foreign literature in the intellectual world is also apparent in the studies of Chekhov and Anatole France in the editorial section, though out of these 36 issues, there is but one with three stories of Chekhov, and two with those of Anatole France (printed in the original French).

Aside from being products of well-known authors, the stories in the The English Review are, for the most part, of a better calibre than those in The Strand Magazine of the same period. Naturally, this higher standard is due to the authors themselves, authors who were aware of the changing attitudes in literature and who attempted to bring something new to their stories. Though the chief interest is still in plot, it is a plot which concerns one episode, not a series of incidents. Henry James, D. H. Lawrence, and W. H. Hudson centred their focus on a single episode, drawing from it as much as they could. They produced a distilled plot, and from it attempted to analyse facets of character more completely. This was the beginning of an

era when the focus of a story was gradually moving from one of plot to that of character, and The English Review selected stories which showed this changing trend. The stories here are more concerned with the revealing of character than in any other magazine up to this time--here was a magazine which surely reflected the 'new' literature of the day.

Though the main section of The English Review was devoted strictly to 'belles-lettres'--new works by prominent and promising new authors--its purpose as a periodical was to attempt to acquaint more fully its readers with the "world of arts, letters, and ideas". Each issue was introduced with poetry, new poetry from the pens of Hardy, De La Mare, and others, and newly discovered poetry of dead writers such as Rossetti and Swinburne. After February, 1909, the section on poetry was entitled "Modern Poetry", and included, among others, the work of Ezra Pound and D. H. Lawrence. After the poetry section came the greater section of short stories and continued short serials. Critical essays were in the last section (usually called "The Month") where reviews, essays on world affairs, and editorials, concluded the issue.

The English Review was directed to the 'quasi-intellectual', and its public was confined to a small segment of society. It was a magazine which attempted to reflect the changing ideals in the literary world, and its aim was not to capture the whole reading public. It has been studied here to compare it with "The Strand" of the same period, and it is felt that another magazine with similar aims to that of The English Review should be mentioned. The London Mercury, which first came out in 1919, has been selected because of its basic similarity to The English Review, and to show the nature of a magazine after the first world war in comparison to the ones studied above.

The London Mercury, published in London, and initially edited by J. C. Squire, congratulated itself on its scope, and--as indicated in its first editorial (November, 1919)--its aim was to satisfy "the current needs of all those who are intelligently interested in literature, in the drama, in the arts, and in music". It was aimed also at the intellectual reader, but its purpose seems to be more esoteric than that of The English Review. Its scope was indeed large, each issue divided into the headings: "Bibliographies of Modern Authors"; "Letter from America" (on the arts there, and

later on this section was extended to include letters from France, Germany, Ireland, Italy and Russia); "Book Production Notes"; "Books of the Month"; "Drama" (criticism); "Fine Arts" (sculpture, painting and music); "Literary Intelligence" (anecdotes and facts about famous literary people) and creative works.

The major section of this magazine was devoted to reviews, and noticable ones in the first three years of its publication are: Aldous Huxley's Limbo (March, 1920), Chrome Yellow (December, 1921), and Mortal Coils (June, 1922); Max Beerbohm's Seven Men (December, 1919); Katherine Mansfield's Bliss and Other Stories (January, 1921) and The Garden Party (April, 1922); D. H. Lawrence's Women in Love (July, 1921) and Aaron's Rod (October, 1922); A. E. Coppard's Adam and Eve and Pinch Me (July, 1921), and Cunningham Graham's Mogreb-el-Acksa (December, 1921). But the arts were not the only interest, and the magazine reviewed books of history, economics, and science (an obvious one was Albert Einstein's The Theory of Relativity in November, 1920).

Closely associated to the reviews, and at times reflecting their subjects, were the numerous critical essays by famous men of letters. The following examples



- A. E. Coppard: "The Hurly-Burly" (July, 1921)  
 E. M. Forster: "Salute to the Orient" (July, 1921)  
                   "Mr. and Mrs. Abbey's Difficulties" (May, 1922)  
 Sherwood Anderson: "I'm a Fool" (May, 1922)

There was also the poetry of Hardy, Hopkins, Lawrence, Frost, Bridges, Brooke and others.

The content and presentation of the short stories in this magazine reflected completely the temper of the period in which they were written and published. By now, the transition to a more subjective story was almost complete. These are stories where the plot is of secondary importance, secondary to the first aim of creating a lasting impression by character synthesis. It was not what the character did, but what he was, which concerned the writer in 1919-22, and particularly those who contributed the few stories in the The London Mercury. While this was a magazine for the 'quasi-intellectual'--and, consequently, for the pseudo-intellectual--it was also for writers who were considered to be 'new', 'avant-garde', leaders of the break-away from literary tradition. Almost without exception, these are stories by the new writer, the writer with a fresh approach to the story. How different these stories are from the ones of mystery, adventure and love presented in The Strand

Magazine only ten years earlier. This can be partly accounted for because of the different publics of the two magazines, but undoubtedly taste had changed and a story of the type mentioned in the above discussion of "The Strand" was no longer acceptable to a great majority of the reading public, and particularly by those who read The London Mercury.

This was the age of magazines, ones whose editors felt a specific pulse in the public and attempted to keep pace with that need. No magazine can completely satisfy every taste--though "The Strand" attempted to do so--and the magazines discussed above show two distinct reading publics. Under competition with each other, and because of a rapid growth in the reading public, the magazines of the first quarter of the twentieth century flourished. They did this in order to satisfy a public that liked to read, for stimulation as well as for entertainment. Unfortunately, it soon came up against the problem of radio which has, in turn, been usurped by the cinema and television. But when competition remained in the same media, the magazine contributed a great deal to the growth of the English short story. Because of its very demand for a story which was short and could be confined to one issue, the magazine helped to better an art which had been at a standstill.



## Conclusion

Despite its emergence as a separate genre at the beginning of the twentieth century, the short story is still considered by some as a part of the larger scheme of the novel. It is distinct; its growth has been quick and rich. It developed out of the Victorian sketch, and was executed by people who saw more than only the description of action in a small piece of prose. The Victorian writer had fallen back on tradition as his touchstone of success. But some writers--in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth century--saw that matters of character synthesis, psychological development, and moral decision were inextricably involved with the action displayed. Upon further reflection, some writers realized that the story was only complete when there was a careful balance of the whole. Firstly, they aimed for a story which was limited in length. They stripped it of all the superfluous embellishments of Victorian rhetoric, the matter became an organic whole, and the short story became a responsible study of construction, economy, and characterization.

The short stories of Rudyard Kipling and Kath-

erine Mansfield approximate each other in so far as they represent an extension and development of the main aims and principles of a true short story. Kipling deals primarily with facets of plot exposition, and his journalistic training conditioned him to a neat short story where every word counts to the final impression. This is not to say that his stories are merely those in which the plot interest is paramount--they are examples only of what can be called 'the plot story'. Some of his work, as a matter of fact, such as "William the Conqueror" and "Without Benefit of Clergy", is very much concerned with character synthesis. Rather, the work of Kipling illustrates a variety of types and functions of plot, but there is always a constant relationship between that action and the exposition of character and setting. His method may gradually change throughout his career, but the themes of his stories are intrinsically the same at the end of his career in the 1930s, as they were in the beginning, in the 1890s.

The same method of analysis has been used to examine the work of Katherine Mansfield. Though her main interest is on how to reveal character in minute and sometimes over-exacting detail, her stories cannot be classified as only 'character stories'. Her plots are

relatively unexciting, and are not tremendous in their universal impact, but they are situations which could happen to anyone. She makes the obvious and the ordinary seem important, attaching to it a significance not found in the work of people who wrote before her time. Mansfield points to the drama in life around her, and her example made other writers realize that immediate and ordinary happenings could be used for stories as much as the exceptional things in the world about which the Victorian writers wrote.

D. H. Lawrence and Aldous Huxley both aimed at the realizing of themes in their short stories. Both were interested in the ideas behind people's actions, the reasoning behind situation. Lawrence felt an almost prophet-like call to discover the mainspring of man's action. By dwelling on emotions, sometimes to a perverse degree, he wrote his stories with one idea in mind: to find the reason for the abstract truths that man thinks about. He takes his people apart, or, at any rate, fixes his attention on one facet of their personality so that a singular picture of emotion is drawn. Huxley's interest is in situation, the reason behind a certain episode rather than the emotions of the people involved. His is a sophisticated world, a world of witty

people who live a life of studied casualness.

A. E. Coppard and Cunninghame Graham have been discussed together because their stories have distinctly similar tones. Both write intentionally about their own lives, and both were gifted with acute powers of observation. Their stories are different, however, because their lives were different. Coppard wrote of rural Oxfordshire, of his own quiet existence, of the people he met, and of the everyday episodes in his own life and theirs. But unlike that of Cunninghame Graham, his work is not the reporting of events, for he made his stories complete in themselves, giving them qualities of a finished short story. Cunninghame Graham's life was one of excitement and action, and the majority of his stories are factual accounts of his interesting life. Only one character emerges from his stories and that is Cunninghame Graham himself--and a more complete picture of him is given only after a number of stories have been read. Whereas Coppard's stories are complete in themselves, Cunninghame Graham's lead on to the next one where more information is acquired. But his work is of the sketch variety, and only occasionally does he fuse the qualities of a real short story.

The first quarter of the twentieth century wit-

nessed the flourishing of the short story, a genre which could only grow without Victorian didacticism and moral teaching. It grew quickly, rapidly changing from a story whose focus was on plot to one of character synthesis. It was an age of introspection, and one where interest was in immediacy. Perhaps more than any other literature before its time, the English short story in the early twentieth century reflected very well the problems of its own society. It is a rich and widely diverse period, an era in which the magazine volume grew tremendously and the reading public widened considerably. This was a stage when it is true that the English short story appeared to be in need of new ideas; fortunately, it acquired them. Today, to all outward appearances, the short story is confident of its own vitality and resources, firmly rooted in the traditions maintained by Kipling, Mansfield, and Lawrence--writers who questioned the assumptions on which the 'plot story' had been constructed, and who searched for forms and techniques more closely in touch with the problems of their day, and more realistic in their treatment of them. This--from 1910 to 1925--was the age of the short story.

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## Bibliography

The following bibliography is neither comprehensive nor strictly selective. It is in two sections: (1) Author Bibliography, and (11) General Books Pertaining to the Subject. The first section deals with books of each author (short story volumes, novels and essays), followed by some works directly written about them. The second section constitutes an acknowledgement of the books I have directly drawn on for this study.

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